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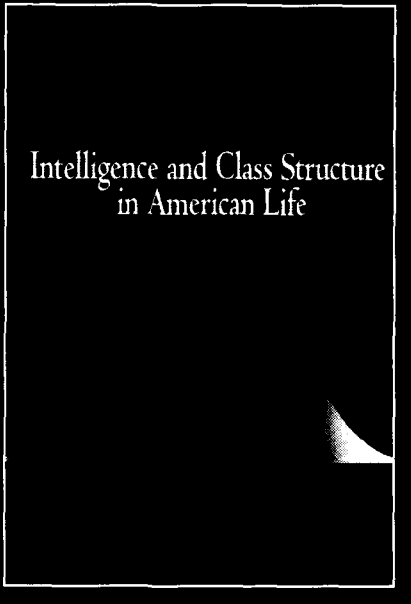

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A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life

February 1996 • Number 60

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Beyond Good and Evil?

Elaine Pagels has forged for herself a brilliant career as an academic superstar (Jeffrey Burton Russell, "Getting Satan Behind Us," November 1995). *The Gnostic Gospels, Adam, Eve, and the Serpent,* and now *The Origin of Satan* are literary events that push their way into the consciousness of the reading public not only by the extravagant publicity that accompanies their publication, but also by inherent virtues that make them a pleasure to read. Pagels has an uncanny ability to find topicality in her material. Like few others, she is able to reflect in an entertaining manner on the conjunction between ancient religious ideas and fashionable contemporary notions of the secular literati. This is no mean feat but it does have its dangers—above all, the distortion of subject matter for ideological purposes. In Pagels' books, contemporary fashion always wins the day. If Christianity survives at all in her ruminations, it is only because she has remade it in the image of the sophisticated professoriate.

These dangers are fully exposed by Jeffrey Burton Russell in his superb review essay of *The Origin of Satan.* There is no greater master of the subject of Satan writing in English than Russell, and his essay is an education in itself. It is informed by a detailed understanding of how evil was perceived in the ancient world religiously and philosophically that corrects many of Pagels' blatant howlers. But it also takes up that which is so important to Pagels' argument: the contemporary belief (which she shares) that sharp distinctions between good and evil are the stuff of religious fanaticism and must give way to an enlightened pragmatism that accepts the relativity of moral choices. Russell is right on the mark: "The popular, wacky assumption is original to post-Enlightenment Romanticism, and it goes against experience. Any explanation of the Holocaust or the gulag must fail unless it confronts the problem of evil."

Without the vigorous effort to understand evil and reject it as the malignant spiritual force it is, there can be no serious moral reflection. By this criterion, Pagels' book is missing something essential at its very core.

Walter Sundberg
Luther Seminary
St. Paul, MN

Jeffrey Burton Russell, in his drunken-sailor review of Elaine Pagels' *The Origin of Satan,* staggers around over enough territory to land face-down in the occasional puddle of insight. . . .

Russell would have us believe that the externalization of evil is universal and not the result of toxic cultural influences. Perhaps he could back this up with an inventory of Buddhist holy wars, Buddhist inquisitions, Buddhist witch hunts, Buddhist colonial genocides, Buddhist slaveries, and Buddhist pogroms. This won't take long to compile, but it might prove embarrassing to those accustomed to thinking that by their roots ye shall know them.

Russell admits that "by casting opponents as adherents of the Prince of Evil, Christians forged a tool that many would wield clumsily, cruelly, and sinfully." In the right hands, presumably, this multipurpose tool could be wielded skillfully, kindly, and sinlessly. . . .

Russell correctly points out that dualism was not invented by Christians. All right, now we're getting somewhere. Neither dualism nor any other significant part of Christianity was original, but was stolen from competitors by the faith once delivered unto the saints. Here's an operating hunch: Maybe Pagels was more interested in the successful marketing of dualism than in product development or patent infringement. . . .

Payne Thomas
Indianapolis, IN

Professor Russell's review of *The Origin of Satan* by Elaine Pagels is commendable in a number of ways. He calls into question most of her main points about Christianity and the Gospels, her doctrinaire relativism,

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and her vague moral and intellectual pragmatism. However, the second and third paragraphs of his essay read as though he is inclined to agree with her that the Gospels demonize the opponents of Jesus and his disciples.

I would note two things about this question of demonization. First, the Gospel of Mark sets the synoptic pattern of *always associating demons and demon possession with crowds.* (Most of the mentions of demon possession in John relate that a crowd of people accuse Jesus of having a demon. John 7:20; 8:48, 52; 10:20.) The one apparent exception to the synoptic pattern, the episode of the Syrophoenician woman who seeks out Jesus to exorcise her daughter (Mark 7:24-30), simply proves the rule. He has retreated from the crowds and she, in faith, has come out of the crowds (like the woman who touches Jesus in Mark 5:25-34). Not once is any person called a demon or devil.

Second, the association of demons with crowds is important for understanding the origin of Satan. The Gospels attest that Satan is "mimetic desire." This is René Girard's term for the basic human desire evoked by the other. It results inevitably in rivalry, conflict, and violence. Satan, that great "spirit of self-destruction and nonexistence," as Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor describes him, is the spirit of the desire to outdo the other, the spirit of accusation and violence. Satan is the projection and personification of mimetic desire. The crowd scenes in the Gospels are remarkable for showing the working of desire for ill (Mark 3:7-13, 21-30; 15:6-15), but sometimes for good if the model is one of sharing and reconciliation (Mark 6:34-44; 8:1-9).

It is this and not, as Pagels contends, the Gospel writers' political maneuvering that best accounts for the relatively favorable light in which Pontius Pilate is cast: even the representative of mighty Rome is subject to the power of the crowd according to Mark. And if he is depicted increasingly in Matthew, Luke, and John as resistant to the crowd before finally submitting, this portrayal emphasizes that power originates with the crowd, whose seething desires would turn them against one another or the authorities unless they found an outlet in a victim.

Satan's origin in the mimetic desire of the crowd also clarifies other passages. If Pharisees are intended as the "sons of the evil one" in Matthew 13:38, which is not at all certain, this would be because they are persecutors of Jesus, trying to turn crowds against him. As for the Jews in John 8:44 who are told they belong to "your father the devil," they had once believed in Jesus and now they threaten to turn on him as a mob. The point is not that Pharisees or Jews are more likely than any others to lynch the innocent victim in times of crisis. The point is rather the exposure of desire and scapegoating that is the key to the Gospels.

Pagels concludes her book by expressing the hope that her research "may illuminate for others, as it has for me, the struggle within Christian tradition between the profoundly human view that 'otherness' is evil and the words of Jesus that reconciliation is divine." If it is a "profoundly human view" that "otherness" is evil, then it is universal, not just a phenomenon of the history of Christianity. And how can we know and accept that Jesus teaches divine reconciliation if the Gospels are attacked as the primary texts for propagating the power of Satan, the spirit of accusation and triumph over the other?

James G. Williams
Syracuse University
Syracuse, NY

For Jeffrey Burton Russell to close his essay with "Pagels joins those who want to save [Christianity] by remaking it in their own image and likeness" is about as close as you get to divulging that he didn't get what she was saying.

Pagels has been writing about the infant Church for many years, her research being thorough and enlightening, for which she has received appropriate commendation. The theme of her writing depicts the suppression of the portion of the Church that was spirit-filled—and not inclined to follow willy-nilly the growing ecclesiastical hierarchy of orthodoxy. That spirit-filled segment became known as the Christian Gnostics (those who knew the Lord) and were ultimately banished by the more powerful orthodox segment.

That banishment was rough—many were jailed, some were killed, and virtually all were purged from participation in the Church.

Remember when Jesus, considered a heretic by his fellow Jews, was accused of having a demon (an unclean spirit). Jesus denied it, and announced that to so blaspheme the work of the Holy Spirit was not only sinful, but was unforgivable.

If someone like Russell doesn't "get" the seriousness of what took place in the Church in those early centuries, it is just as well—he avoids that drastic condemnation. But for those who have eyes to see, let them shout it from the rooftops.

Thomas J. Scannell
Schodack Landing, NY

As Elaine Pagels' book illustrates, hatred of orthodoxy seems the law of the land these days in academia. And the equation of truth with novelty is the inevitable outcome. Before the infamous decade of "free love" and "do your own thing," people at least had their hunches about reality and fact (even if their "personal knowing" admitted to perceptual flaws). With that admission of partial knowledge came also a humble sense of the knowability of things and a certain trust in the integrity of "mere" tradition (without any necessary slavery to it).

Every generation has its gnostics. My problem of late is figuring out why any of them would want to call themselves *Christians* given the smorgasbord of spiritual systems to choose from these days (with no stigma attached to opting out of the Church). If what we want is the intoxication of gnostic illumination sans historic orthodoxy, why not jumbojet to India where masters of that particular poison abound.

Bruce Herman
Gloucester, MA

While I am in general agreement with the opinions expressed by Jef-

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frey Burton Russell, I am slightly uneasy about his description of Pauline *gnosis* as "simple understanding, not secret illumination." The author is certainly correct to contrast Paul's understanding to any sort of early gnosticism, yet I would hardly characterize Paul's understanding as simple: the reality of the Resurrected Christ wherein the Law has found its fulfillment (Romans 10: 4) is hardly that. Nor would I then summarize a Pauline understanding of law as being "made for humans rather than humans for the law," which almost appears to read Paul through the lens of Mark 2:27 (without 2:28!). My worry then is that Prof. Russell's characterization of Paul and the law ultimately might serve to encourage the moral relativism that he so eloquently argues against in this essay.

Charles Bobertz
St. John's School of Theology
Collegeville, MN

Names Can Never Hurt Me

Since my name and my family were mentioned, and assumptions made about them, in the article by Amy A. Kass and Leon R. Kass ("What's Your Name?" November 1995), I would like to correct the authors' error. Based on an article in the *New York Times* that described our choice of the surname Sienna, they wrongly asserted that our family name is "in no case the name of the entire family but of the children only." Had your authors bothered to do some fact checking with us, they would have learned that indeed Sienna is the name of our entire family. Both my husband and I have the name Sienna hyphenated legally onto our birth name. Thus I am Elyse Goldstein-Sienna, my husband is Baruch Browns-Sienna, and our children are Noam, Carmi, and Micah Sienna. We are the Sienna family, and while it is true that our name has no past, it has a present and a future. Both my husband and I have our separate birth identities and a common married identity. All of our friends who chose family names have done the same. I would have liked to know if the other families mentioned in the article have adopted the same practice.

Historically, for many ethnic groups *all* last names were a matter of choice. My great-grandfather in Romania was not Goldstein. None of the Jews in his shtetl had last names. They were known in Hebrew as the son or daughter of their parents' Hebrew names—first names! The name Goldstein was chosen for him at Ellis Island. So much for the notion of a long chain of history being passed through a last name. In fact for Jews, it is the first name, not the last, that has spiritual meaning and gives identity. My children are named after beloved dead relatives by first names, not last.

While it would be more comfortable to live in a world of clear patriarchal expectations, where women and men accept the status quo by accepting one identity, one history, one family—the husband's—the article's dire predictions of our children's "broken family identity" based on their last names is ridiculous. We have also been told that it would be easier for our children's identity if they had "normal" English names like Norman, Carl, and Michael instead of Hebrew names. Our three Sienna children are, in spite of the Kasses' discomfort, extremely well adjusted and identified as happy, healthy, and productive members of the Jewish community, the larger Canadian community, and our family.

(Rabbi) Elyse Goldstein-Sienna
Kolel
Thornhill, Ontario
Canada

Amy A. Kass and Leon R. Kass reply: We are, of course, glad to learn the truth about the Sienna family and are sorry if they are distressed. Our mistake was to trust the *New York Times*' story, which celebrated such creative last-naming. No doubt Rabbi Goldstein-Sienna has also written the *Times* to correct its misrepresentation.

Not content to correct a personal factual error, Rabbi Goldstein-Sienna reaches for Jewish tradition to justify her practice, managing to introduce a few errors of her own. In Western Europe, Jews have used surnames beginning as early as the eighteenth century. True, in the Eastern European shtetlach, Jewish children were known often by their patronymics (LRK's mother, of blessed memory, was Chana Chaim-Leizer's), but the patronymic is not a matter of choice, any more than belonging to one's family of origin is a matter of choice. And, by the way, we mean *patro*nymic: traditionally, Jewish boys and girls were—are—officially named as sons and daughters of their father (Leib ben Shmuel, Chava bat Kalman). (A lovely exception: in prayers for the recovery of the sick, the mother's name is sometimes invoked instead, it being thought to carry greater weight in an appeal for God's mercy.) Are we to understand that Rabbi Goldstein-Sienna takes shtetl or traditional Judaism as normative in this—or any other—matter? Not likely, when under its laws and customs she could have aspired no higher than *rebbetsin* (the Rabbi's wife).

Rabbi Goldstein-Sienna personalizes and psychologizes our argument. We were not interested in what is "more comfortable" or in who is "extremely well adjusted." We made no "dire predictions" about her children or anyone else's. Our argument concerned rather the symbolic understanding of marriage and lineage embedded in our surnaming practices. We tried to make clear the deep inner meaning (and great good sense) of the traditional practice of the wife accepting the gift of her husband's family name. Rabbi Goldstein-Sienna, incapable of controlling her animus against "clear patriarchal expectations" and "the status quo," has not bothered to try to understand or to respond to the substance of our argument.

The Mind as Algorithm

In "The Atheism of the Gaps," (November 1995) Stephen M. Barr presents the deeply flawed Lucas-Penrose argument that there could not possibly be a computer program (or algorithm) that could perform all the mental feats of which a man is capable. Seeking to deduce a contradiction, the argument begins with

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the assumption that there is such an algorithm. Call it algorithm M. Professor Barr then claims that "a human mathematician (or group of mathematicians) could construct a 'Gödel proposition' for [M]."

This claim is false because it mistakenly assumes that M is consistent. A man capable of doing arithmetic is capable of making arithmetic errors. Thus M too must be capable of making arithmetic errors. This means M can arrive at false arithmetic conclusions, which is to say M is not consistent. As Mr. Barr himself points out, Gödel's theorem applies only to *consistent* theorem provers: those algorithms that generate only true statements of arithmetic. There is no such thing as a Gödel proposition for any other kind of algorithm. Thus there is no Gödel proposition for the inconsistent algorithm M.

Since the Lucas-Penrose argument assumes that there is such a Gödel proposition for M, the argument is unsound. The argument does not show that men can perform special mental feats that algorithms cannot, and it remains possible that the mind is an algorithm.

Daniel M. Offutt
Westport, WI

Stephen M. Barr replies:

Mr. Offutt suggests that the human mind may be an "inconsistent algorithm." This is indeed one of the most common objections to the Lucas-Penrose argument. I cannot give a full answer to it here, but fortunately I do not have to since Lucas effectively demolished it in both the essay and the book that I cited in my article. Moreover, Penrose devotes most of chapter three of *Shadows of the Mind* to a painstaking and exhaustive treatment of this and related objections. Here I must content myself with a few brief remarks.

There is a crucial difference between a computer that normally operates by a sound and consistent algorithm but occasionally makes an error because of a glitch (due, say, to a cosmic ray changing a "bit" in its memory, or—in the case of a human—to a lack of sleep) and a computer that operates by a truly inconsistent algorithm. It has been shown that in any inconsistent formal system every proposition can be proven both true and false. True inconsistency of an algorithm, therefore, implies a *radical* inconsistency. Such an algorithm, unlike us, would be incapable of recognizing its own errors and correcting them. It would be as able and as satisfied to demonstrate that 2+2=17 as that 2+2=4.

If Mr. Offutt is right that such an inconsistent algorithm underlies his own mental processes, so that they are intrinsically and radically unsound, then he is by virtue of that very fact not someone to be argued with.

Irish Conservative Blues

Let this letter sound as a keen to echo the lament of David Quinn for the state of conservatism in Irish society ("To Be a Conservative in Ireland: A Lament," November 1995). As a first generation American of Irish extraction and an observer of things Irish, I have caught the odor of Irish cultural decay for some time.

It is sad to hear of even elderly relatives and acquaintances in the Connemara Gaeltacht, hardly avatars of personal autonomy and pick and choose Catholicism, who have given up attendance at Sunday Mass after the sexual scandal of Galway's Bishop Eamon Casey. This apparent loss of faith, resulting from clerical misconduct, is one example that points to a weakness which David Quinn has correctly identified as a formerly overbearing church which is now weakened and open to continuous onslaught from an adversary cultural cadre loaded for bear. Also, the neopaganism one detects among many of the newly arrived Irish in America disappoints those of us who had hoped that perhaps Chesterton was correct in believing that it was nations like Poland and Ireland that held out hope as counterweights to secular modernity. Instead we see Ireland stumbling down the road of indulgence and relativism.

It has now become indisputable that the quasi-clericalism relied on by leaders like Eamon de Valera and practiced by the Irish Church was shortsighted and cloaked fundamental cultural difficulties. The crutch has been pulled away. The building of an Ireland true to its deepest self requires that the civil society, with the Church as a solid anchor, be reconstructed along lines closer to America's experience (sans the sixties) than the toxic solutions that are being offered by the likes of the editors of the *Irish Times*.

Michael Walsh
Boston, MA

David Quinn's lament over Ireland hints at the difficulty of translating North American conservatism into United Kingdom terms. A line from *Forrest Gump* has furnished considerable grist for thinking about this problem of translation. Because every box of chocolate in the United Kingdom clearly labels each of its contents, the force of the analogy comparing life to a box of chocolates was completely lost. The words are intelligible but the point is missed. Similarly, while conservatives in the U.K. make similar kinds of noises as their North American counterparts about economic competition, lower prices, and greater opportunity, somewhere a key point is missing.

What is missing is exemplified by the privatization of state-run industries. In spite of conservative rhetoric about free markets and expanded opportunity, privatization is largely perceived as the swapping of badly managed government-run monopolies for slightly-less-badly-managed "private" monopolies with state protection. Conservatives, it seems, fail to understand that the conflict is not between the state and the private sectors. The real battle is over de-privileging the myth of managerial expertise in both the state and private sectors. In the U.S., various advocates of the conservative moral vision take issue with the claims that society can be ordered by "planning," "regulating," and "managing." Here, there is no compelling articulation of a political, economic, and moral vision of Michael Novak's *order unplanned.* Instead, Tories busily position themselves against a reinvigorated Labor party as the *best*

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managers—hardly the stuff of great political vision.

The jig is up for the Tories. The working class has rightly intuited that the managerial myth, no matter how impressive its sales rhetoric, is neither morally compelling nor in their own best interest. Given the choice between a future shaped by the Tory platform of private bureaucracy "working closely" with coercive government or the Labor platform of government in control of the bureaucracy, the choice seems to be for Labor. During the time when Labor again owns the reins of power, it must be hoped that there will be a truly conservative U.K.-fashioned alternative to the managerial, bureaucratic order of society. What Quinn and all who care about the future of the whole U.K. await is a new St. Newt.

D. K. Weber
Sunderland, England

Yeshiva Lessons

I read with particular interest the Public Square article "What Dennis Prager Did, and Didn't, Learn in Yeshiva" (October 1995) on Jewish truths that should be known to all, because his experience so much resembles mine as a yeshiva student in Montreal over two decades ago. It is certainly true, as he recalls, that in yeshivas the world of the *goyim* is nonexistent. This xenophobia is especially evident in the ultra-Orthodox ones, where secular studies and a university education are also scorned.

This strikes one as very parochial today, as the world has become a global and interdependent village. Then again, even after the Holocaust the relation of non-Jews to Jews is still that of hostility and jealousy. Nothing crystallizes this so clearly as the attitude of non-Jews toward the reborn Jewish homeland, the State of Israel.

Why is the world obsessively counting and scrutinizing each and every acre of land that Jews reside on in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, the heart of Jewish patrimony—won in a just war in 1967—which together with Israel proper still form a tiny sliver of a country? Huge countries have seized vast lands and the world could not care less. The Christian and Islamic countries together possess some 150 capitals, and yet they are vehement in not allowing Jews to have their only capital, the old city of Jerusalem.

The Jews have contributed enormously to civilization, and without the Hebrew Bible and prophets there would be no Christianity and Islam. In Judaism, *hakarat hatov* means the duty to recognize and appreciate the good someone does for you. Unfortunately, Mr. Prager omitted this fundamental truth one also learns in a yeshiva, which Gentiles should also be taught.

Jacob Mendlovic
Toronto, Ontario
Canada

O.P., not S.J.

Although the Jesuits will mind only a little and the Dominicans somewhat more, Dinesh D'Souza's misidentification of Francisco de Vitoria as a Jesuit ("The Crimes of Christopher Columbus," November 1995) should be of concern for him and his allies beyond the feelings of Jesuits and Dominicans.

Francisco de Vitoria was a Dominican, an O.P.—not a Jesuit, an S.J. And the reason for concern is precisely to avoid the recent criticism Glenn Loury aimed at D'Souza, that is, that his scholarship is faulty. The mistake is not a serious one, but it is not trivial either.

In tackling the topics that he does, D'Souza must be especially careful.

Nino Langiulli
St. Francis College
Brooklyn, NY

Sanctified Work

Fr. Neuhaus' Public Square piece on Opus Dei, "The Work of God" (November 1995), was a much appreciated and welcomed effort to be fair, judicious, and helpful in this delicate if somewhat tiresome "controversy." He brings a refreshing and wise perspective to bear on the universal Christian phenomenon of "radical discipleship."

After thirty-four years of deeply satisfied membership, I can only say that as more people come to know first-hand the depth and simplicity of Blessed Josemaria's message—that all our work and ordinary duties must become an expression of love for God—in most cases the controversies vanish.

I would only make a small correction and a comment: Opus Dei began working forty-five years ago in this country, not twenty, at the University of Chicago. And I think it a misnomer to call it a "movement." Rather, as a Personal Prelature, Opus Dei represents a new and permanent dimension of the Church's ordinary care of souls. It is a vehicle of the Holy Spirit to spread worldwide the universal call to sanctity for laymen in their ordinary duties, offering a program of spiritual formation to aid in living it out. While the vocation to Opus Dei is not for everyone, this new message is—which amounts to a spiritual awakening for many who drink deeply of this spirit of the sanctification of work. We strive to combine the serious cultivation of interior life with hard work and total immersion in worldly affairs. Thus do we propose to contribute to "restoring all things in Christ."

Daryl J. Glick
South Orange, NJ

Unconstricted Reconstructionists

As a so-called Christian Reconstructionist, who writes a regular column for the *Chalcedon Report* (Box 158, Vallecito, California 95251; free sample copy available on request), I was amused to see brother Neuhaus refer (Public Square, November 1995) to the world of Reconstructionism as "constricted." But it isn't. Our world is *God's* world. We believe the Lord Jesus Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords, that all power is given to Him, in Heaven and on Earth, and that every area of life is to be governed by His Law-Word. I cannot imagine a less "constricted" theology than this one.

John Lofton
Laurel, MD

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FIRST
THINGS
FEBRUARY 1996

Truths and Untruths About the Catholic Alliance

"Blatant untruths" are among the sins perpetrated by the Catholic Alliance, according to Bishop Howard Hubbard of Albany, N.Y., who addressed a closed executive session of the U.S. bishops last November. The Alliance, a division of the Christian Coalition, "will create massive confusion" among politicians and the Catholic faithful because it "purport[s] to represent the position of the Catholic Church." "At a minimum," he said, "it must be made clear that the Catholic Alliance does not speak for the bishops, who are the official teachers in the Church."

The bishops' political agenda "cuts across political and ideological lines," said Hubbard. "I believe a separate, purportedly 'Catholic' organization which does not adhere to this agenda will undermine our heretofore unified efforts." The Alliance, he said, is "another effort to split Catholics from their bishops." That the Christian Coalition did not consult with the bishops conference before setting up the Alliance he finds "startling and offensive" in an "age of ecumenical sensitivity." While acknowledging that Catholics are free to join the Alliance, he urges the bishops to distance themselves from it and to discourage parishes and church organizations from cooperating with it. The attack on the Catholic Alliance is redolent of a clericalism that many thought had been retired by the Second Vatican Council.

And if blatant untruths have been perpetrated in this dispute, it is not clear that they have been perpetrated by the Christian Coalition. Bishop Hubbard would have done his fellow bishops a service had he made available to them the mission statement of the Catholic Alliance. That statement begins with the assertion of Vatican Council II that the laity are to penetrate public life with a Christian spirit (*Gaudium et Spes*, 43). It then continues: "Animated by the call of the Second Vatican Council, enlightened by faith and motivated by our citizenship, we Catholic American lay people join with the Christian Coalition to promote, through action, a free and truly just society." In no way does the Alliance purport to speak for the bishops or for the Catholic Church. It is a voluntary association of Catholic lay people seeking to exercise their responsibility as citizens in effecting social and political change. Only those wedded to clericalist patterns of the past should feel threatened by that.

Nor is the Alliance an effort "to split Catholics from their bishops." True, the mission statement cites popes (John XXIII and John Paul II) rather than statements of the U.S. bishops conference as the Alliance's source of inspiration, but perhaps that should prompt the bishops to ask themselves why their statements have elicited so little response from many of the Catholic people. In his address, Bishop Hubbard said, "I realize too that the Catholic Alliance may be emerging in the absence of our own church's grassroots organizing effort on issues of public policy." What he does not say is that people cannot be mobilized to champion an "agenda [that] cuts across political and ideological lines." People become activists, whether of the left or of the right, precisely in order to press a political or ideological line. The bishops are in a bind. If they say they have no political line, they cannot rally people because there's nothing to rally people to. If they acknowledge the line they do have, they cannot rally people who disagree with that line.

What Bishop Hubbard also does not say is that the agenda of the bishops conference is widely perceived, with justice, as supporting the Democratic Party. Apart from a few issues such as abortion and school choice, the forty-plus positions implicitly or explicitly endorsed in the bishops' recent statement on

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"Political Responsibility" side with the Democrats against the Republicans. It is a constant puzzlement why bishops and their bureaucrats even bother to deny that. All one has to do is match "Political Responsibility" against the platforms and leadership statements of the parties. For all their high moral rhetoric, the bishops bring little to the political debate that is not already provided by one of the parties. Little wonder that a recent Gallup poll indicates that only 7 percent of Catholics look to religious leadership for guidance on matters of public policy. Little wonder that some bishops feel so threatened by the Catholic Alliance.

Bishop Hubbard complains that Ralph Reed & Co. did not consult with the United States Catholic Conference (USCC) before launching the Catholic Alliance. Can anyone believe for a minute that the USCC would have helped or encouraged such an initiative? The plain fact is that the USCC, for all its pretensions to nonpartisanship, has a clear political and ideological agenda, and that agenda is significantly different from the more straightforwardly partisan agenda of the Christian Coalition. (Although for reasons of tax exemption, both the bishops and the Coalition do a delicate dance around the question of their partisanship.) Partisanship is part of democracy, and it comes with the risk of encroaching upon the bishops' claim not only to be the teachers of the Catholic people but to speak for sixty million Catholics on public policy, which they manifestly do not. It is deeply distressing that the authority of the bishops has in fact been seriously undermined, but it is not the Christian Coalition that did the undermining.

Bishop Hubbard says he finds it "startling and offensive" that in this "age of ecumenical sensitivity" the Christian Coalition did not consult with the bishops. Dare one ask whether Bishop Hubbard and other bishops consulted with the Christian Coalition before launching their public attacks on the Catholic Alliance? (The "closed" discussion about the Catholic Alliance was officially published in *Origins* on December 7, 1995 and has been widely disseminated throughout the Catholic community.) Ecumenical sensitivity, one might suggest, is a two-way thing. We would not like to think that the bishops assume that evangelical Protestants—especially evangelical Protestants who are politically conservative—are not included within the protocols of ecumenical sensitivity.

A more constructive approach is suggested by Bishop James McHugh of Camden, New Jersey, who notes that he and other bishops were not at all happy with news stories reporting that the bishops had attacked the Catholic Alliance. In his diocesan column, Bishop McHugh writes: "Actually, the initiation of the Catholic Alliance offers an opportunity for Catholics to discuss critical issues with the alliance leaders and with the Christian Coalition. In the face of the secularism of our political landscape and the trivialization of religion by some of our most prominent political leaders, Christians should strive to find many more areas of agreement in developing political strategies. And such efforts may make the coming year even more interesting and productive."

The ecumenical question is addressed in the final paragraph of the Catholic Alliance's mission statement, which quotes John Paul II's 1995 encyclical on Christian unity (*Ut Unum Sint*, 43): "It happens more and more often that the leaders of Christian communities join together in taking a stand in the name of Christ on important problems concerning man's calling and on freedom, justice, peace, and the future of the world. In this way they communicate in one of the tasks which constitutes the mission of Christians: that of reminding society of God's will in a realistic manner and warning the authorities and their fellow citizens against taking steps which would lead to the trampling of human rights. It is clear, as experience shows, that in some circumstances the united voice of Christians has more impact than any one isolated voice."

The public debate over the Catholic Alliance has been marred by blatant untruths and generalized mendacity. We are deeply ambivalent about this movement. When the Christian Coalition was first formed we challenged in these pages the choice of name. However one might agree or disagree on specific policies, it is a dangerous thing to attach the name "Christian," the name of one's highest allegiance, to any political movement. The danger is not, or at least not chiefly, to the integrity of politics but to the integrity of religion. As with "Christian Coalition," so also with "Catholic Alliance." But those are the names that have been chosen, and apparently there is nothing to be done about it. The Christian Coalition says that 17 percent of its present membership is Catholic and, with the formation of the Alliance, it hopes to boost that in short order to over 25 percent. It seems likely they will succeed. Indeed, that may be a modest goal. Many, maybe millions, of Catholics feel their deepest convictions are not effectively represented in the public square, the name "Catholic" was there for the using, and, as Mr. Dooley might have said, "Ralph Reed seen his opportunities and he took 'em."

In his address, Bishop Hubbard suggests that the bishops should explore canon law to see what can be done to limit the use of the term "Catholic" by organizations of which they do not approve. With due respect, that is pitiful. Not only can nobody have a copyright on "Catholic" (or on "Christian"), but the suggestion completely evades the substantive reasons why, as the bishops see it, others are intruding upon their turf. At the heart of this affair is a massive failure of communication, and the failure of communication is not unrelated to a lack of candor. If it threat-

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ens religious integrity to identify as "Christian" or "Catholic" a candidly stated political agenda, it is a greater threat to religious integrity when bishops press a political agenda disguised in the claim that they are "not a religious interest group but a community of conscience within the larger society." In their lack of candor, or sincere self-deception, about their partisanship, the bishops elicit disagreement, which is not necessarily bad. Much more seriously, they elicit distrust, which drives to the heart of the Church's constitution and the irreplaceable leadership of her bishops.

The Catholic Alliance is not "splitting" Catholics from their bishops, but it is not above exploiting Catholic discontent with episcopal leadership. Exploitation of opportunities is the name of the political game. If they want to know who provided the opportunity, the bishops need look no further than to themselves and the Washington apparat (USCC) by which they are poorly served.

We do not know how this unhappy state of affairs is to be remedied. The answer is not for the bishops to be as candid about their partisanship as is the Christian Coalition. The answer is certainly not for the bishops to change their politics and become as strongly Republican as they are now Democratic. If there is an answer, and there must be an answer, we expect it begins with the bishops reflecting with urgency and care on the difference between being political players and ecclesial leaders, asking whether, at the hands of the USCC, they have not been seduced into frittering away episcopal credibility in exchange for the empty promises of political influence.

A choice must be made between the inestimable dignity of the episcopal office and running a general purpose political lobby. On morally defining questions of paramount urgency, such as abortion and euthanasia, the bishops must risk entering the political fray. And even on these questions their influence should be exercised mainly in an indirect manner, through teaching and encouraging the Catholic people to effective action. But there is neither imperative nor warrant for the bishops to squander their credibility on the laundry list of political disputes to which the USCC has committed them. It is demeaning and counterproductive for the bishops to be perceived as an auxiliary of the Democratic National Committee, and a rather ineffective auxiliary at that.

Meanwhile—while the bishops reflect on the ways in which they have played into the hands of the Christian Coalition—we can find no grounds for criticizing members of the Catholic Alliance who say of themselves: "Animated by the call of the Second Vatican Council, enlightened by faith and motivated by our citizenship, we Catholic American lay people join to promote, through action, a free and truly just society." Although we do wish they would find a different name. FT

Chastity

To a body pierced by pleasure
grant an adulterous heart, grant unslaked desire,
command the ungelded, though wildly off
balance: stand still.
Chastity requires a man
who feeling the weight of the stone in his hand
who feeling his muscles coiled to throw
will turn and crouch bloodied, taking each blow,
and tightening the coil of punishment I'll know
how the stone will strike like nails in your hand
unless I, deliberately, let the weight go.

Michael R. Jones

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This Time

Lost in the Movies

James Nuechterlein

Last year I saw two truly vile movies, *Pulp Fiction* and *Kids*. The first turned my stomach. The second filled me with shame for having sat through it: leaving the theater, I felt unclean. Those movie experiences reminded me of the depths to which popular culture has sunk, a reminder confirmed, in a different way, by the movies' reception. *Pulp Fiction* drew near-unanimous raves as a postmodernist film classic, and its failure to win the Academy Award for best picture surprised many. The reaction to *Kids* was more reserved, but still respectful; if nothing else, the critics said, its unspeakable depravity offered instruction on the pervasive moral anomie among today's adolescents.

The redeeming feature of such movies (and of the morally vacuous response they typically receive) is that they concentrate our minds. Yes, we say, we're in a culture war. These things are evil, and it is the duty of the not yet totally corrupted to oppose them.

Recently I had another movie experience: I saw *The American President*. It's nothing like *Pulp Fiction* or *Kids*, with none of their brutal violence or degrading sex. It's rather a stylish romantic comedy, directed by Rob Reiner with a good deal of charm and wit. It has splendid sets, good pace, pointed humor, and—in Annette Bening and especially Michael Douglas—believable and attractive romantic leads. *The American President*'s story line does not bear close scrutiny, and, towards the end, the film makes the great mistake of taking itself too seriously, but if it's finally fluff, it's undeniably well-made fluff.

Two things about this otherwise diverting movie bothered me though, one of them relatively insignificant, the other worthy of some note—and related, if only obliquely, to the problems raised by *Pulp Fiction* and *Kids*.

The lesser point concerns the film's cardboard politics. If you're a liberal, this is the ultimate feel-good movie. In the person of Michael Douglas' President, you get to be tough (you bomb Libya) but compassionate (you feel really bad about the raid's innocent casualties). And you grow—from a competent and decent (but facile and uncommitted) neo-liberal to a truly caring (but unsentimental) paladin of the left. The film's conservatives, of course, are uniformly cynical and mean-spirited. And they don't look nearly as good as Bening and Douglas.

That's fair enough, in a way. After all, these are hard times for liberals, and it might seem churlish to begrudge them harmless fantasy pleasures. Indeed, for most of the film, its liberal sympathies don't get in the way of a nonliberal viewer's enjoyment. But then in the last reel, Douglas, having got political religion from environmental lobbyist Bening, delivers an ideological stem-winder (to an improbably awed press corps) that rudely alters the film's tone. What was a pleasant romance with amusing political overtones turns in a moment into a smug, humorless tract for our reactionary times. It turns back a moment later, but the damage has been done, and, unless you're a born-again liberal, you leave the theater annoyed that your enjoyment has been spoiled for a pot of message.

My other reservation about *The American President* is of greater moment, even if, in a way, it's hardly noticeable. This is, as all films of its type are, a cute movie. The protagonists meet cute, date cute, kiss cute. And go to bed cute. There's the problem.

Sex is not cute. It's many things, but not that. And yet in this movie—as virtually everywhere in American popular culture—that's the way it's portrayed. Here President Douglas, a widower, inadvertently meets lobbyist Bening. He's intrigued and invites her to be his escort at a state dinner. They're obviously attracted to each other, but the occasion offers little opportunity for personal contact. A few days later, he invites her to the White House for a private meal with him and his teenage daughter. The cute kiss occurs, interrupted by the Libyan bombing crisis. A few days after that, she returns to the White House determined to break things off (because of rampant media speculation), and the cute sex happens. They have known each other for something between a week and ten days.

None of this, it should be emphasized, is put forward in a titillating or salacious manner. The sex, which takes place off-screen, is handled discreetly and inoffensively. This is not, in any sense, a dirty movie. Quite the contrary. It's PG-13, suitable for almost any audience.

It's precisely this matter-of-fact, no-big-deal treatment that needs to be noted. We hardly notice the message being sent—which is, that it is entirely natural and unremarkable that any two ordinary people, having met and found each other attractive, promptly hop into bed. No relationship, no commitment. Sex first, and then we'll see what develops. That's the way we do things now, and those who don't—and think in fact we shouldn't—are made to feel, if not sunk in prudery, at least quaintly behind the moral curve. Indeed, we are made to feel awkward even to have raised the point.

Now of course in a family entertainment like *The American President* an enduring bond does develop. Of sorts. It's clear at the fade-out that the couple will have, as we say today, a long-term relationship, but

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marriage is never mentioned or even suggested. Again, we are made to feel that this is beneath notice.

One final point of sexual correctness. In the seduction scene, it's the woman who (cutely) takes the initiative. He's nervous, but she's bold and reassuring, and, admittedly with little resistance, he's talked into bed. This is a woman, and a couple, for our times.

All this analysis, of course, risks overkill. Anything said here about *The American President* could be said about most popular movies and the great majority of TV sitcoms. But that's the point. The myth of casual sex is endemic to our culture.

What makes this doubly perverse is that it's just that—a myth. Recent serious studies of American sexual behavior indicate that we live differently—and better—than our culture says we do. Most people do not, in fact, treat sex lightly. They do not go to bed whenever presented with a likely situation or partner. Most identify sex with marriage, and, once married, they remain faithful to their partners. Sexual insouciance is hardly unknown in America, but neither is it the cultural norm we've allowed ourselves to pretend it is.

That curious self-indulgence has costs. We bemoan signs of sexual promiscuity among young people, and yet we immerse them in a culture that portrays sexual restraint as a curiosity, if not a life-denying pathology. No one educated by our popular culture could believe that "true love waits" is anything other than a repressive—and pernicious—lie.

Which brings us back to my, and our, movie problem. With *Pulp Fiction* and *Kids* the enemy is in clear view. With *The American President* and its innumerable imitators, we think we're still among friends. FI

Ash Wednesday

Fingernails scrubbed clean as latrines
in the army, this symbol
of a man dirties his thumb
with our sin, the powdery ash riding high
on his pores, not sinking in
before he sketches the gray
of our dirt-birth across a brow
we were born to furrow.

Listen to the sound of forgiveness:
the crossing of skin, the cult-
like queuing up to explode
in ripped whispers, "Lord,
have mercy, Lord, have
mercy, Lord, have mercy."

And we want it. And we take it
home with us to stare back
from a lover's forehead,
to come off in a smear on the sheets
as we roll onto each other's skin,
or to wear like a bindhi this medal of our not winning
each day we wake to the worlds
we are and are not.

And when we wake too early
before the light of just-becoming-day
sneaks in on us, and we stand, toes cold,
in the tiled bathroom, still lonely, deceived
into piety, scrubbing away the grime of our humanness
like fierce fierce toothbrushes on latrines
in the army, there it is still,
raw with our washings:
the human beneath.

Marjorie Maddox

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Opinion

Form Over Matter

David R. Carlin

Early in November 1995, the administrative board of the United States Catholic Conference issued the latest version of its quadrennial statement on politics and religion, this one entitled: "Political Responsibility: Proclaiming the Gospel of Life, Protecting the Least among Us, and Pursuing the Common Good."

The statement has a number of very fine passages. For example: "The challenge for our church is to be principled without being ideological, to be political without being partisan, to be civil without being soft, to be involved without being used." Excellent! Here is a definition of the relationship between religion and politics that all faiths could make their own.

And again: "Our moral framework does not easily fit the categories of right or left, Republican or Democrat." Exactly right! This is a church that claims to see moral truth steadily and see it whole; and since the moral vision of political parties is always imperfect, the Church's moral vision will never "easily fit" that of a political party.

But the USCC statement contains another passage that is little short of disastrous:

> We stand with the unborn and the undocumented when many politicians seem to be abandoning them. We defend children in the womb and on welfare. We oppose the violence of abortion and the vengeance of capital punishment.

Unfortunately it is this passage that will be most widely quoted. This is the passage for which the statement will be famous (or infamous). People who know only one thing about the document will know this.

But what's wrong with this statement? Is there anything in it to which Catholics knowledgeable about the moral and social teaching of their Church could object? No—at least not if one "unpacks" the passage and looks, one by one, at its four distinct assertions, which are:

1. We oppose abortion.
2. We oppose injuring illegal aliens.
3. We oppose hurting children on welfare.
4. We oppose capital punishment.

Back in the days when Aristotelianism was still respectable in Catholic quarters, Catholic writers had the habit (one they rather overdid) of distinguishing between the "matter" and the "form" of a thing. Well, if I may be forgiven a momentary relapse into Aristotelianism, these four assertions are the *matter* of the passage; but the passage also has a *form*, namely a series of three epigrams, each of which expresses a parallelism: the first between aborted children and illegal aliens, the second between aborted children and children on welfare, the third between aborted children and convicted murderers. It is both matter and form that give meaning to the passage; and as Aristotle would add, form is always the more important of the two.

In other words, the passage suggests that we should condemn all four evils with a fine and impartial evenhandedness. One-and-one-half million abortions a year is dreadful, yes; but it is no more dreadful than the execution of a few dozen murderers per year; which in turn is not more dreadful that refusing to increase payments when an unmarried woman on welfare has yet another baby; which in turn is no more dreadful than expelling illegal immigrants from the country.

Further, you don't have to be a brilliant political analyst to realize that the passage is, at least in effect if not intention, pro-liberal and anti-conservative—despite the document's avowal that it takes no sides between left and right. A standard-brand liberal would say, "These guys hit safely on three out of four: welfare, illegal immigrants, and the death penalty. They strike out only on abortion. They're batting .750, which is far better than Ted Williams in his prime." And a standard-brand conservative would say, "They're hitting only one for four. They get abortion right but everything else wrong. A very poor batting average of .250." The USCC document must have caused much rejoicing at Democratic National Committee headquarters.

The scandal is compounded by the fact that the USCC position supporting welfare benefits for further out-of-wedlock children is at best a questionable inference from the Catholic teaching that the community has a responsibility to care for the poor, especially poor children. Other well-meaning Catholics, who would also like to abide by that charitable teaching, believe that if you subsidize out-of-wedlock births you get more of them; hence they hold that a cap on benefits will in the long run be good for the poor. The USCC counters that a cap will create an incentive for more abortions; the other side rejoins that a cap will reduce the rate of unmarried conceptions and thus lower the abortion rate. Who's right? I don't know. But I do know there is something very strange in suggesting a moral equivalence between abortion and a debatable welfare innovation that may

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or may not hurt the poor.

As for illegal immigrants, what Catholic teaching requires that we demonstrate a high level of solicitude toward people who have broken American law by entering the country and continue to break it by staying here? Of course these lawbreakers are often needy people and their children; but equally needy are the law-abiding people who stayed at home, thereby showing respect for American law. True, we are a nation of immigrants; my own father, for instance, and all four of my grandparents came to the United States as immigrants. But they entered lawfully, as have most immigrants in American history. Being kind to the needy is part of Catholic social teaching; but so is showing respect for the rule of law. At all events, it is odd to suggest a moral equivalence between abortion and the enforcement of laws against illegal immigration.

I realize that the average American bishop, if confronted with the above interpretation of the famous passage, would respond, "You have caricatured our intentions. You have to read the passage in the context of the entire document, and you have to read the papal encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*. Then you'll see that we consider abortion to be by far the worst of these evils, especially when abortion takes place not rarely but in phenomenal numbers. And of course we always make a distinction between moral doctrine, on the one hand, and strategies to implement that doctrine, on the other. The former we teach with authority, the latter we simply offer as suggestions. You are accusing us of saying things we could not possibly say, given our Catholic moral theology."

I agree that the bishops couldn't possibly have meant what they said in the famous passage—or rather, what the fifty members of the USCC board, not all of them bishops, said on their behalf. Nonetheless, it was said. The passage speaks for itself. We may be told that the bishops would not dream of treating abortion and the other issues as morally equivalent, and that they have no intention of telling Catholics that liberals are better than conservatives. But that's how others will read the passage—and they will be correct in doing so, for that's what it clearly implies.

Maybe the moral of the story is this: Beware epigrammatic parallelism, for it can easily distort your meaning. But I suspect the story is one with a second moral as well: If you are a busy bishop serving on a committee, beware who writes the drafts of the documents you will be expected to sign. I have no knowledge of what goes on at USCC headquarters, but based on internal evidence I'm willing to bet that the famous passage was written either by some bishops who were too busy to appreciate how literary form can determine meaning or by some liberal church bureaucrats who understood perfectly well how form determines meaning.

It may be worth adding that I write this as one who is essentially sympathetic to the *intentions* of the bishops—as opposed to some of their verbal formulas. I very much like the idea of the "seamless garment" or "consistent ethic of life"—even though Catholics on the left, some of them working within church bureaucracies, have exploited this idea to justify their own softness on abortion. After having been appalled by the moral egoism promoted by the cultural left during the last quarter century, I'd hate to see the right produce a quarter century of economic egoism masked by moralistic self-righteousness and xenophobia. In short, I want balance: rights and responsibilities, individuality and community, freedom and moral law, economic creativity and social justice, Americanism and internationalism. As for abortion, it should not be the single issue, but it should at least be *primus inter pares*, for if we cannot get abortion right it is unlikely we will be able to get anything right. Neither the Democrats nor the Republicans are champions of this balanced view. But the Catholic bishops *are*.

Or at least they would be—if only they could say what they mean instead of allowing draftsmen at USCC headquarters to put misleading words into their mouths.

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The Uses of Clerical Scandal

Philip Jenkins

When the Pope visited the United States last fall, the media indulged in a predictably frenzied examination of the general state of "crisis" in the American Catholic Church. Oddly, though, few reporters devoted space to what only a few years previously would have been described as the Church's greatest crisis: the spate of cases involving the sexual abuse of minors by Catholic priests. Though such cases continue to appear, some very serious (and often demonstrating a grievous insensitivity on the part of diocesan authorities and their lawyers), it no longer seems plausible to speak of a general collapse of clerical discipline and celibacy, or of a systematic cover-up by Catholic bishops. Clerical sex abuse is today most often seen as a lamentable but rare occurrence.

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Some anticlerical Catholics had hopes that the abuse scandals might be the detonator that would bring down the whole clerical system, comparable to the sexual and financial misdeeds that led to the Protestant Reformation. But such historical parallels now seem wildly exaggerated; we are by no means standing at a new Wittenberg.

In fact, we are now sufficiently removed from the perception of an "abuse crisis" that reached its height in 1992-93 to place it in its broader context. What we find is a sobering lesson on the gap between the reality of a social problem and the ways in which it is presented in public discourse. Moreover, the main culprits in misrepresenting this issue as a specifically Catholic problem were Catholic activists themselves, generally working in what they considered to be the best interests of the Church.

It seems hard to remember now that the topic of clerical sex abuse was regarded as untouchable before about 1985 and the massive attention devoted to a Louisiana priest named Gilbert Gauthe. The Gauthe affair set the pattern for dozens of later scandals: a priest who molested children in one parish was repeatedly reassigned after his predilections became known, without warning the new parish of potential danger. The attitude of Catholic authorities to victims and parents in these cases tended to be arrogant and even hostile. Incidents of this sort multiplied over the next decade and culminated in 1992 with the exposure of a serial pedophile named James Porter, who had molested dozens of children in his southern Massachusetts parishes in the 1960s. Each new scandal fueled litigation and media reports, which in turn fueled expectations of further cases. A sense of pervasive corruption within the Church was reinforced by the appalling (and quite unfounded) charge that Cardinal Joseph Bernardin of Chicago had molested a seminarian in the 1970s. The endlessly repeated orthodoxy was that Gauthe and Porter were far from isolated individuals. Perhaps 6 percent of Catholic clergy were "pedophiles," some six thousand priests in the U.S. alone.

Throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s, commentators often employed the inaccurate term "pedophile priest." "Priest" made the problem look like the preserve of Catholics, and presumably the direct consequence of celibacy, though the misbehavior was distributed across the ecclesiastical spectrum. And while "pedophiles" are men who molest prepubescent children, the vast majority of sexually erring priests were in liaisons with teenagers or young adults. While their acts were sinful and often illegal, such behavior does not typically exhibit the more extreme predatory and compulsive character of pedophilia.

As for the numbers cited in these years, most derive from the kind of urban legend that transforms a vague estimate of something into a firm statistic for something completely different. "Six percent" apparently mutated from a working guess for the number of Catholic clergy with pedophile *inclinations*, not practice. (Similar estimates have been proposed for noncelibate Protestant clergy.) The most solid assessment of clerical sexual problems is found in the Chicago study, commissioned by Cardinal Bernardin, that examined the personnel files of all 2,252 priests who had served in the archdiocese between 1951 and 1991. Between 1963 and 1991, fifty-seven priests had been accused of sexual abuse, in addition to two visiting clerics. The commission reviewed all charges, not by the standard of criminal cases (which insists on proof beyond a reasonable doubt), but on the less stringent civil criterion of the preponderance of evidence, including legally inadmissible hearsay. Eighteen cases were judged not to involve sexual misconduct, leaving charges against forty-one priests, or about 1.8 percent of clergy. Only one instance probably involved true "pedophilia," the sexual molestation of small children.

Before taking even these modest figures as secure, it should be noted that admissible evidence would have permitted convictions against no more than a handful of the supposed malefactors. The number of Catholic priests convicted of criminal sexual acts is very small, and represents a minuscule proportion of the hundreds of thousands of the men who have served as priests.

If clerical sexual misbehavior is uncommon (and pedophilia extremely rare), how did Gauthe and Porter come to be regarded as typical of Catholic priests? It is tempting to blame the media, and indeed newspapers and television indulged wholeheartedly in anti-Catholic polemics. The media would not have dared to offend American Catholics, however, if the path had not been blazed by Catholic sources themselves.

The issue of clerical abuse emerged full-blown in a June 1985 issue of the *National Catholic Reporter*, the widely quoted source for countless later accounts and the direct origin of the phrase "pedophile priest." Since then, the paper has been a continuing vehicle for coverage of the abuse issue and often given platforms to such reformers as Jason Berry, A. W. Richard Sipe, Eugene Kennedy, and Andrew Greeley, the group of commentators and experts who became the media's favorite interpreters of the burgeoning crisis.

The *National Catholic Reporter* took up the issue so vigorously for praiseworthy reasons, seeking to expose what the paper regarded as a crying abuse of power by the Church, in which ecclesiastical self-protection took priority over the interests of victims and their families. But clerical abuse served the purpose of those for whom a general "crisis" showed the severity of problems within the Church. The exploding concern with clerical abuse in 1986 and 1987

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coincided with a "Catholic civil war" in which dissidents fought the Church hierarchy over such issues as sexual ethics, academic freedom, and the role of women. Not all the commentators shared the whole reformist agenda, and Greeley remains a defender of clerical celibacy, but the centrality of the abuse theme is evident in their books and articles.

Of course 6 percent of priests are pedophiles, the Catholic reformers argued, and who knows how many more are involved with teenagers. What else can we expect from a Church that keeps its clergy in a lifelong state of sexual immaturity, that denies the spiritual gifts of women, that preserves an authoritarian system? The abuse issue illustrates (the indictment continued) the secretive workings of the hierarchy, the neglect of the laity, and the pernicious effect of celibacy. For feminists, epidemic clerical abuse is precisely what their theories would predict of a patriarchal institution that permits unchecked sexual exploitation.

From this perspective, the answers to abuse are obvious: the ordination of women, the end of mandatory celibacy, the democratization of traditional hierarchies, and perhaps the reform of distinctive institutions like confession (which can offer the predatory priest the opportunity to identify and seduce his victims). Nothing will suffice short of the creation of an authentically *American* Catholic church. As so often in the past, a sexually rooted anticlerical polemic is used to attack the Church. In the last two years, clerical abuse scandals have been employed in precisely this way to undermine the legal and political position of the Church in such strongly Catholic nations as Ireland and Austria.

Due notice should also be paid to the traditionalist and conservative groups that publicized the pedophile issue and exaggerated its severity in order to counter what they regarded as homosexual subversion of the Church. It was the traditionalists in 1989 and 1990 who organized demonstrations at national gatherings of Catholic bishops and focused media attention on the sins of the Church—hoping to discredit liberal and modernist prelates. For both the ecclesiastical left and right, pedophile charges found audiences predisposed to take up an issue that could be used to promote specific policy agendas. It was the enormous utility of clergy abuse that ensured the absence of a pro-Church reaction or even criticism of the often outrageous exaggerations of the problem.

If Catholic factional conflicts encouraged the sensationalistic treatment of priestly misdeeds, so did the Church's organizational structure. Compared to other American denominations, the Catholic Church produced a disproportionately high level of *reported* scandals, for, unlike most of its Protestant counterparts, the Catholic Church is a hierarchical organization with parish clergy subordinate to episcopal authorities who observe and record their behavior. Each Catholic priest has a diocesan dossier that records official complaints—and such dossiers have ironically provided the material for many legal actions. Lawsuits against the Catholic Church can follow established paper trails to ensure large financial judgments against a whole diocese. The typically more decentralized and congregational polity of Protestant churches makes them less attractive targets. In large measure, this is why the "pedophile pastor" rarely appears in the demonology of television talk-shows and why celibacy occupies center stage in so many analyses of priestly depredations.

During the 1970s and 1980s, psychological values and assumptions permeated the religious world no less than the secular culture, often through the vehicle of self-help and recovery movements. But an intellectual chasm separates the assumptions of traditional churches from those of mainstream therapy and psychology. The medicalization of wrongdoing sharply circumscribes the areas in which clergy can appropriately exercise their professional jurisdiction, and this loss of acknowledged expertise to therapists and medical authorities at once symbolizes and accelerates a substantial decline in the professional status of priests and ministers.

And yet, not only were the clerical abuse scandals generally interpreted according to therapeutic views and policies, but the churches themselves adopted the rhetoric of the therapists. When a crisis was acknowledged in the early 1990s, most statements by the Catholic hierarchy accepted the notion of the compulsive and irreformable nature of adult sexual activity with children and admitted the radical tenet that implicated priests should never be restored to parish ministry. They agreed that child victims urgently required therapy from secular psychologists and counselors, itself a rejection of the means of healing offered by the Church. Catholic authorities accepted without qualms the expansive claims made by therapists about the massive extent and life-long consequences of sexual abuse—both ideas that are in reality open to serious challenge.

The clerical abuse scandal wrought great damage upon American churches, and above all upon the Catholic Church, which suffered blows to its morale and prestige far more serious than its large pecuniary losses. Can anything positive be drawn from this whole mess? Chances of avoiding repetition seem slight: it is probably too much to ask that the news media will in future exercise caution before making wild generalizations indulging ancient religious stereotypes. Meanwhile, the relationship between clergy and laity has been severely tested, and it will be many years before priests are able to associate with young people on anything like the free and easy terms that provided opportunities for abuse. Father Porter casts a long shadow.

Yet other more favorable images emerge from the crisis, including the juries who were able to acquit

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some falsely accused priests and to reject demands for large financial damages. But two individuals particularly deserve commemoration. One was Stephen Cook, the former seminarian who reported his falsely "recovered" memories of sexual violation by Cardinal Bernardin. His charges were instantly and widely cited by the media, which face no restrictions on quoting the most extravagant allegations once they have been lodged in a civil lawsuit. While many plaintiffs would have pressed their charges ruthlessly in the hope of gaining some compromise settlement, Cook came to realize the falsity of his supposed recollections and publicly withdrew the allegations. Bernardin, who had reacted with astonishing dignity and courage, made a heroic effort to reconcile with Cook and spoke eloquently on the occasion of Cook's death in 1995. Suffering, manipulation, slander, and injustice thus gave rise to charity, strength, forgiveness, and love: a lesson that the oddly matched images of Bernardin and Cook should epitomize many years after the memory of the abusive clergy has passed into oblivion.

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The 1934 Million Man March

Peter L. Berger

The following is a report filed by Albert Goodwill, an American journalist, after the 1934 Nazi party rally in Nuremberg (an event depicted in the well-known film Triumph of the Will *by Leni Riefenstahl).*

Nuremberg, a rather sleepy town in Franconia, had never seen anything like it. Tens of thousands of people, from all parts of Germany, descended on the town on the occasion of the annual rally (*Parteitag*) of the National Socialist Workers Party (NSDAP). This was the first gathering of the party since it took over the government last year. Understandably, it took place in an atmosphere of triumph and celebration. It commemorated the struggles of the National Socialist movement in the past. More importantly, it was intended to show the spirit and the direction of the new Germany following the taking of power by the NSDAP.

The rally was brilliantly organized. The logistics functioned perfectly—no mean feat, given the numbers involved. Event followed event in a masterful choreography, as one party detachment after another marched forward to proclaim allegiance to the cause. The climax, of course, was the arrival of Herr Hitler himself, now in his capacity of Reich Chancellor as well as leader (*Fuehrer*) of the party. He arrived by plane, viewed the parade, and then delivered one of his customarily long speeches. Observers of Herr Hitler and his movement, of course, had on previous occasions witnessed his remarkable personal magnetism and his capacity to orchestrate ceremonies capable of inspiring mass enthusiasm. In that sense, this rally was nothing new. Its significance, however, does not come from the details of the several carefully staged events. It was, of course, a victory celebration and it was the largest gathering of the party since its beginnings in Munich over ten years ago. But the most significant aspect was the atmosphere that pervaded it from beginning to end.

The atmosphere was festive, uplifting, and, above all, peaceful. There was not a single incident of violence or disorderly behavior. This would be remarkable in itself, given the fact that the majority of the participants were young men, many of them coming from backgrounds of great deprivation and underprivilege. It is more remarkable as one observes the behavior of the large numbers of stormtroopers, the notorious SA in their brown uniforms with the swastika armbands. These are men who have a history of street fighting and aggression. On this day their behavior could not have been improved upon by any group of American Boy Scouts. They were relaxed, friendly, solicitous of people with problems. An old lady who had inadvertently strayed into the path of the parade was gently and courteously escorted off the street by two smiling stormtroopers as bystanders applauded.

This rally showed quite dramatically what has been noted before: Whatever else one may say about it, the NSDAP has given young German men a new sense of identity and self-confidence, and in many cases it has channelled individuals with a criminal past into a disciplined, socially responsible way of life. This achievement must be seen against the background of recent German history. It is a history of defeat, national humiliation, economic misery, and the tangle of social pathologies for which the Weimar period has come to stand. Among these pathologies are the decline of the family, the open display of sexual perversity, crime and juvenile delinquency, and a general disintegration of morality and any sense of national purpose. The NSDAP has been in the forefront of the struggle against all these wounds in the body of German society.

Pointing out these things, of course, is not to endorse the ideology of the National Socialist movement or to admire the personality of its leader. An American observer will inevitably be repelled by the

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antidemocratic animus of the movement. Its paramilitary paraphernalia—uniforms, banners, chants, general strutting about—will seem slightly ridiculous to him, as will the theatrical mannerisms and the hours-long speeches of Herr Hitler. More seriously, Americans must have moral qualms about the strident anti-Semitism of the NSDAP, and about some of the methods used by it to intimidate its political opponents both before and after its takeover of the German government.

It is important, however, to place these negative aspects in a larger context. And it is very important not to look at these things through American eyes. No American can fully appreciate what these Germans have gone through, and Americans should be wary of imposing their own values on people with very different traditions and experiences.

The outside world, and especially the democracies, must ask what kind of a future Germany is to be desired. Is it a Germany still wallowing in defeat and resentment, suffering from all the social ailments listed? Or is it a Germany confident of its identity, self-assured and disciplined, determined to regain its social health? To ask these questions is to answer them. The events in Nuremberg not only help us to understand the spirit of the new Germany, but provide some grounds for expecting that the harsher undertones of the National Socialist movement will come to be muted as the NSDAP attains political respectability.

It is noteworthy that Herr Hitler's speech at the rally was not marked by the usual anti-Semitic diatribes or, for that matter, by threats against his political adversaries. The speech accentuated the positive goals of the new regime—national self-confidence, solidarity, and the tasks of reconstruction. As usual, of course, the speech was too long for American ears, and there remained traces of Herr Hitler's somewhat bizarre views. It is all the more important not to confuse the message and the messenger. It is difficult to find fault with the message.

If one wants to influence a politically powerful movement, it is far better to engage it in dialogue than to isolate it. Nuremberg 1934 suggests that the time has come for a creative dialogue with the new Germany.

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Parts of Speech

God is not an inference,
    some extra object
    clotting with dark
    among the branches of maples.

Or kicked up with the dust,
    mote in an attic beam
    of spring-cleaning sun,

or conjured up in the gray
    of a man's head.

But in the red
    of a woman's womb,
God becomes blood
    and muscle and mortar of bone.

    the spoken, written conjunction
which fastens maple and beam,
    mote and mind, maid and man.

R. S. Dietrich

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Why We Can't All Just Get Along

Stanley Fish

Whenever I teach *Paradise Lost*, the hardest thing to get across is that God is God. Students invariably (one is tempted to say "naturally") fall in with the view declared by William Empson in *Milton's God* when he says that "*all* the characters are on trial in any civilized narrative." In Milton's narrative, of course, God is a central character, and the entire story gets going, Empson observes, when Satan "doubts his credentials." Empson analogizes the situation to that "of a Professor doubting the credentials of his Vice-Chancellor," and remarks with some sarcasm that "such a man would not be pursued with infinite malignity into eternal torture, but given evidence which put the credentials beyond doubt."

In this account of the matter, "civilization" and "evidence" go together and dictate our chief responsibility as readers—which is, Empson says, "to use our judgment about the characters." It is also the obligation of the characters in the story, and the fact that they perform it differently is what gives the plot its energy: the loyalist Abdiel, Empson observes, tells Satan and his rebel followers "that God should be obeyed because he is good, and they deny that he is good," and as far as Empson is concerned, they have good reason to do so. Actually the scene Empson is remembering is somewhat more complex. When Abdiel rises, "Among the faithless, faithful only he" (V, 897), what he says is not that God is good (which would imply a conclusion reached by submitting God's actions to the judgment of independent criteria). Rather he says that God is God, which implies that even to put God to such an evidentiary test would be a category mistake—how can you give a grade to the agent whose person defines and embodies value?—that would constitute the gravest of sins, whether one calls it impiety ("Cease . . . this impious rage"), self-worship, or simply pride.

What Abdiel says is: "Shalt thou give law to God, shalt thou dispute / With him the points of liberty, who made / Thee what thou art?" (V, 822-24a) Earlier Satan had justified his rebellion by invoking freedom and liberty; Abdiel now points out that these terms have no weight when the agent from whom you would be free made and sustains you. Satan in turn finds this argument preposterous and replies to it with a classic statement of rational empiricism:

> That we were form'd . . . say'st thou?
> . . . strange point and new!
> Doctrine which we would know whence learnt:
> who saw
> When this creation was? remember'st thou
> Thy making, while the Maker gave thee being?
> We know no time when we were not as now;
> Know none before us, self-begot, self-rais'd.
> (V, 853, 855-60)

This is the philosophy of the man from Missouri: show me, seeing is believing, and since no one, including you, has seen the moment of his creation, I don't believe in it. There is nothing in the present scene or in my experience that leads me inescapably to the conclusion you urge. Where did you ever get this absurd notion? What's your proof? ("Doctrine which we would know whence learnt?") I must have made myself.

Satan's way of thinking is contrasted directly in the poem with Adam's. Recalling the moment not *of* his creation, but just after his creation, Adam reports "Myself I . . . perused . . . limb by limb" and found that I could speak and name, "But who I was, or where, or from what cause / Knew not" (VIII, 267, 270-71). Like Satan, Adam knows no time before he was what he now is, but he gives a quite different

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answer to the question he immediately poses: "how came I thus, how here? / Not of myself, by some great maker then / In goodness and in power preeminent" (VIII, 277b-79). The goodness and power for which Satan seeks independent evidence is here *assumed* by Adam; and once the assumption is in place it generates a program for action and a life-project: "how may I know him, how adore, / From whom I have that thus I move and live?" (VIII, 280-1)

It might seem that in presenting these two moments in *Paradise Lost*, I am placing in opposition two ways of knowing, one by evidence and reason, the other by faith. But in fact on the level of epistemology both are the same. Satan and Adam begin alike from a point of ignorance—they know nothing prior to (the precise word is "before") the perspective they currently occupy; and the direction each then takes from this acknowledged limitation follows with equal logic or illogic. Adam reasons, since I don't remember how I got here, I must have been made by someone. Satan reasons, since I don't know how I got here, I must have made myself, or as we might say today, I must have just emerged from the primeval slime.

In neither case does the conclusion follow necessarily from the observed fact of imperfect knowledge. In both cases something is missing, a first premise, and in both cases reasoning can't get started until a first premise is put in place. What's more, since the first premise is what is missing, it cannot be derived from anything in the visible scene; it is what must be imported—on no evidentiary basis whatsoever—so that the visible scene, the things of this world, can *acquire* the meaning and significance they will now have. There is no opposition here between knowledge by reason and knowledge by faith because Satan and Adam are committed to both simultaneously. Each performs an act of faith—the one in God and the other in materialism—and then each begins to reason in ways dictated by the content of his faith.

That is why each performs as he does when confronted with a new (or apparently new) situation. When Eve worries that the growth of the garden will overwhelm the unfallen couple's efforts and prevent them from carrying out their assigned task, Adam replies by reasoning *against* the evidence of empirical circumstances and declaring that however things might seem, God, preeminent in goodness and power, will provide: "These paths and bowers doubt not but our joint hands / Will keep from Wilderness with ease" (IX, 244-45a), a confidence unsupported by anything either of them sees. Satan, on the other hand, rather than beginning from the first premise of a benevolent and provident God, has as his first premise the radical contingency of outcomes. In a world ruled by chance and opportunity, the world in which he can emerge, as it were, out of nothing, who knows what the next turn of fortune's wheel might bring? Perhaps God will nod or make a misstep; after all, Satan reasons, on the evening of the first day of the war in heaven, God has thrown everything he has at us and we're still standing; we "have sustain'd one day in doubtful fight, / And if one day, why not Eternal days?" (VI, 423-4)

"If one day, why not eternal days?" has exactly the same structure as "I wasn't witness to my creation, therefore it didn't happen." In both instances, there is a refusal—no, an inability—to conceive of possibilities not already included in the field of empirical vision, the evidence of things seen. The habit of identifying the limits of reality with the limits of his own horizons defines Satan—it makes him what he is and is everywhere on display. Listen, for example, to his earlier rehearsal of the strategy he will employ in the actual temptation. He has heard Adam and Eve in conversation and found out about the forbidden fruit and the penalty attached to eating it, and he exclaims to himself:

> O fair foundation laid whereon to build
> Their ruin! Hence I will excite their minds
> With more desire to know, and to reject
> Envious commands, invented with design
> To keep them low whom knowledge might exalt
> Equal with Gods; aspiring to be such,
> They taste and die: what likelier can ensue?
> (IV, 521-27)

That is to say: God has set the conditions of their lives; if they violate those conditions they will die. I will get them to eat the apple, and they will die. What else could happen? What else could happen is that the apparently iron logic of God's justice—he says at one point of Adam, "die he or justice must"—can be broken by the exercise of his mercy, which, he has said, "first and last will brightest shine" (III, 134). The idea of mercy is literally unthinkable by Satan, who can only imagine agents with motives and goals just like his. He certainly cannot imagine an agent who would contrive to circumvent the force of his own decree and who would do so by paying himself the price his own law exacts. *It is not a thought Satan could entertain* because the very structure of his consciousness—grounded in self-worship and selfishness—excludes it as a possible insight.

I make the point strongly because it is so alien to the modern liberal-enlightenment picture of cognitive activity in which the mind is conceived of as a calculating and assessing machine that is open to all thoughts and closed to none. In this picture the mind is in an important sense not yet settled; and indeed settling, in the form of a fixed commitment to an idea or a value, is a sign of cognitive and moral infirmity. Milton's view is exactly the reverse: in the absence of a fixed commitment—of a first premise that cannot be the object of thought because it is the enabling

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condition of thought—cognitive activity cannot get started. One's consciousness must be grounded in an originary act of faith—a stipulation of basic value—from which determinations of right and wrong, relevant and irrelevant, real and unreal, will then follow.

For the modern liberal, beliefs are what the mind scrutinizes and judges by rational criteria that are themselves hostage to no belief in particular; for Milton, beliefs—in God or in oneself or in the absolute contingency of material circumstances—are the content of a rationality that cannot scrutinize them because it rests on them. Milton's motto is not "seeing is believing," but "believing is seeing"; and since what you see marks the boundaries of your knowledge, believing is also knowing; and since it is on the basis of what you know—whether what you know is that there is a God or that there isn't one—that you act, believing is acting. What you believe is what you see is what you know is what you do is what you are.

It is a tenet of liberal enlightenment faith that belief and knowledge are distinct and separable and that even if you do not embrace a point of view you can still understand it. This is the credo Satan announces in *Paradise Regained* when he says "most men admire / Virtue, who follow not her lore." That is, it is always possible to appreciate a way of life that is not yours. Milton would respond that unless the way of life *is* yours, you have no understanding of it, and that is why, he declares in another place, that a man who would write a true poem must himself *be* a true poem and can only praise or even recognize worthy things if he is himself worthy.

In this, as in so much else, Milton follows Augustine. Repeatedly in his *On Christian Doctrine*, Augustine begins a sentence by declaring, "No one would be so stupid as to say" or "It is obviously absurd to assert" or "It is utter madness to believe" or "No reasonable person would believe in any circumstances that. . . ." What invariably follows, however, is an assertion that has been found reasonable by millions, and one wonders what Augustine means by a "reasonable person." The answer is that a reasonable person is a person who believes what Augustine believes and who, like Augustine, can only hear assertions contrary to that belief as absurd.

Moreover, the belief whose prior assumption determines what will be heard as reasonable is not itself subject to the test of reasonableness. Reason's chain does not ratify it, but proceeds from it. After all, Augustine explains, the logical validity of a chain of inference is independent of the validity or nonvalidity of the proposition with which the chain begins: "Correct inferences may be made concerning false as well as true propositions." It follows that a conclusion reached will be really—as opposed to formally—true only if a true proposition anchors it, and "the truth of a proposition is inherent in itself"; that is, its truth cannot be established by some procedure to which it must submit. A reasonable mind, then, is a mind closed to the possibility that certain basic propositions—Augustine's example is "Christ is risen"—could be questioned. A reasonable mind is a mind that refuses to be open.

Of course an open mind, a mind ready at any moment to jettison even its most cherished convictions, is the very definition of "reasonable" in a post-Enlightenment liberal culture; and in the ears of those who have been socialized into that culture, a position like Augustine's will have the sound of obvious irrationality. That is certainly how John Stuart Mill, with whom Milton is often linked, incorrectly, as a precursor of modern thought, hears it. For the Mill of *On Liberty*, what "no reasonable person would believe" is that the highest value is the value of obedience. Mill is incredulous before a philosophy according to which "all the good of which humanity is capable is comprised by obedience," and he is aghast at an ethics that requires nothing of man but "the surrendering of himself to the will of God." He thinks it barbarous that Christians hold obstinately to an article of faith and then "stigmatize those who hold the contrary opinion as bad and immoral men." That is no way, he complains, to know the truth, which can be known only "by hearing what can be said about it by persons of every variety of opinion." It is a man's obligation to keep "his mind open to criticism on his opinions" and "to listen to all that could be said against him." He must strike the stance not of the "impassioned partisan," but of "the calmer and more interested bystander" who exercises his "judicial faculty" and sits "in intelligent judgment." The duty of the reasonable man is to be tolerant of all views, and he identifies *in*tolerance with religious thought, for "in the minds of almost all religious persons . . . the duty of toleration is admitted with tacit reserves"; that is, with the reserve of whatever position they hold sacred. It is intolerance that leads Christians to "teach infidels to be just to Christianity" while they themselves show no disposition to be "just to infidelity."

One wonders how Mill could have written these words without some sense of how oddly they sound: be *just* to infidelity, that is, to error, apostasy, evil? What could he possibly mean? In fact what he means depends on not taking the word "infidelity" seriously, that is, as a value judgement. As Mill uses it, "infidelity" is simply the name of an opinion, a point of view to which we are to accord the respect due all points of view. It is neither true nor false, good nor evil; it is rather one vendor in a marketplace whose business—a business never, by definition, concluded—it is to separate out the truths from the falsehoods, a process that cannot be fairly conducted, Mill would say, if a particular point of view—for example, "Christ is *not* risen"—is stigmatized in advance.

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The trouble with Christianity, and with any religion grounded in unshakable convictions, is that it lacks the generosity necessary to the marketplace's full functioning. Christianity, Mill declares, in what he takes to be a devastating judgment, is "one-sided," that is, insistent upon the rightness of its perspective and deaf to the perspectives that might challenge it.

I am hardly the first to observe that Mill's position contains its own difficulties and internal inconsistencies. The imperative of keeping the marketplace of ideas open means that some ideas—those urged with an unhappy exclusiveness—must either themselves be excluded or be admitted only on the condition that they blunt the edge of their assertiveness, and present themselves for possible correction. Willmoore Kendall asks, if a society is dedicated, as Mill urges that it be, to "a national religion of skepticism, to the suspension of judgment as *the* exercise of judgment par excellence," what can it say to a man who urges an opinion "*not* predicated on that view," a man who "with every syllable of faith he utters, challenges the very foundations of skeptical society"? To such a man, Kendall answers, the society can only say, "You cannot enter into our discussions." "The all-questions-are-open-questions society," he concludes, cannot "practice tolerance toward those who disagree with it"; those "it must persecute—and so on its very own showing, arrest the pursuit of truth."

This is a very powerful argument, and one to which I shall return, but it is not the argument I will finally want to stress, because to use it as a weapon against the doctrine of liberal toleration is to win a debating point but concede the larger point by accepting toleration as the final measure of judgment. If you persuade liberalism that its dismissive marginalizing of religious discourse is a violation of its own chief principle, all you will gain is the right to sit down at liberalism's table where before you were denied an invitation; but it will still be *liberalism's* table that you are sitting at, and the etiquette of the conversation will still be hers. That is, someone will now turn and ask, "Well, what does religion have to say about this question?" And when, as often will be the case, religion's answer is doctrinaire (what else could it be?), the moderator (a title deeply revealing) will nod politely and turn to someone who is presumed to be more reasonable. To put the matter baldly, a person of religious conviction should not want to enter the marketplace of ideas but to shut it down, at least insofar as it presumes to determine matters that he believes have been determined by God and faith. The religious person should not seek an accommodation with liberalism; he should seek to rout it from the field, to extirpate it, root and branch.

Liberals, on the other hand, need not be so aggressive (although they will always be passive-aggressive) since the field, as it is presently demarcated, is already theirs. That is why Martha Nussbaum, in a recent piece in the *New York Review of Books*, feels that, in order to discredit him, she need only quote Michael McConnell when he argues for a notion of truth that has reference to "authority, community, and faith." Someone who would link truth to concepts of authority and faith—the equivalents of Mill's hated "obedience"—is obviously beyond the pale and constitutes a danger, or so Nussbaum asserts, to "the very norms of academic freedom and academic objectivity." McConnell, Professor of Law at the University of Chicago, is among the most vocal of those who have been challenging the domestication and trivializing of the religious sensibility, but a reading of the article Nussbaum cites ("God Is Dead and We Have Killed Him: Freedom of Religion in the Post-Modern Age," *Brigham Young University Law Review*, Winter 1993) suggests that he poses no danger at all.

McConnell begins by examining a brief filed by Robert Abrams, former Attorney General of the State of New York, in defense of a ruling that refused a religious group the use of a public meeting room for the showing of a film. Noting that the Attorney General grounds his position in a characterization of religious experience as "inviolately private" and therefore out of place in a public forum, McConnell angrily declares it "inconceivable that a public official would say that about any other worldview": "If feminists, gay rights advocates, Afrocentrists, or even secular conservatives tried to communicate their ideas . . . to the public Abrams would never say they should keep their ideas to themselves." In an age, McConnell observes, "when previously marginalized voices are welcomed to the public dialogue," only religion is "privatized and marginalized" and "must be kept under wraps."

McConnell is here making two points which he thinks go together, but which in fact are finally in tension with one another. The first point is that a religion privatized to the extent that the world is kept quarantined from its potential influence is a religion not taken seriously. In his *Areopagitica* Milton pokes some high literary fun at a man who, uncomfortable with the sharp demands placed on him by religious faith, decides to hand his religious obligation over to a hired agent who will, for a fee, breathe out the appropriate prayers and perform the required acts of piety. This surrogate is well paid and provided for, "is liberally supped and sumptuously laid to sleep," and after having been "better breakfasted than he whose morning appetite would gladly have fed on free figs between Bethany and Jerusalem, walks abroad at eight, and leaves his kind entertainer in the shop trading all day without his religion." Milton's scorn at this picture of a faith held so lightly that it leaves the everyday world unaltered is matched by McConnell's distress at a public/private split that assures the same lack of practical efficacy: a religion deprived of the opportunity to transform the culture

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in its every detail is hardly a religion at all.

But McConnell immediately allows this point to be swallowed up by another, by the debating point I have already identified: this exclusion of the religious impulse from the public sphere runs contrary to the professed liberality of an open society. "In an open society, we presume that the uninhibited, robust, and wide-open exchange of viewpoints benefits us all."

The key to what is happening here is the fact that the phrase "uninhibited, robust, and wide open" comes from *New York Times v. Sullivan*, a 1964 case in which the Supreme Court dislodged from its position of primacy in libel matters the standard of truthfulness. In place of truth, the Court substituted the standard of free-for-all debate in relation to which false and defamatory statements are on a par with true and accurate statements, on the deeply skeptical reasoning that both alike are opinions: "Erroneous statement is inevitable in free debate, and . . . must be protected if the freedoms of expression are to have the 'breathing space' " they need; and "this is true even though the utterance contains 'half-truths' and 'misinformation.' " In this and other passages, the court privileges expression as a value over the substantive worth and veracity of that which is expressed.

Religious discourse, however, cannot be unconcerned with the substantive worth and veracity of its assertions, which are in fact *presupposed*, and presupposed too is the urgency of proclaiming those assertions—the good news—to a world asked to receive them as the whole and necessary truth. The ethos of *New York Times v. Sullivan* is finally inimical to the religious impulse, which does not value talk for its own sake, but values the end—spiritual regeneration leading to regenerate action—to which some, but not all, forms of talk may bring us.

By couching his brief for religious expression in the terms of free speech doctrine, McConnell falls in with the very trivializing of religious expression he deplores, for under a *New York Times v. Sullivan* standard, religious expression is just one more voice in a mix that refuses the claim of any particular voice to be prior and controlling. When McConnell characterizes his own essay as a "plea for old fashioned broadmindedness"—that is for toleration—he seems not to realize that broadmindedness is the opposite of what religious conviction enacts and requires. Religious conviction, as Mill sees from the enemy position, requires narrowmindedness, the discovery of and hewing to the straight and narrow way. Broadmindedness is what *liberalism* requires and, by invoking it as a standard, McConnell gives the game away to his opponents.

He does it again when he unmasks the liberal claim of neutrality. "Liberal neutrality," he complains, "is of a very peculiar sort," for it defines "neutral" so that it means "secular"—neutrality between "conceptions of the good life" so long as they are not God-centered, "as if agnosticism about the theistic foundations of the universe were common ground among believers and nonbelievers alike." Since this neutrality has no obligation to the theism it does not recognize except as a negative limit-case, theism will lose out when the supposedly neutral state weighs its claims. "Virtually any plausible public purpose," McConnell laments, is "deemed sufficient to override the right of religious exercise." The result is the "strange phenomenon" of a liberalism that "proclaims its neutrality toward competing ideals of virtue . . . but is committed in practice to the promotion of particular ideals and—even more—to the eradication of others." By marginalizing religious ideals, liberalism has failed to live up to its own ideal. The trouble with liberalism is that it is not liberal enough.

Here again is the familiar debating point, but it is itself *beside* the point; for what McConnell describes is not a liberalism enmeshed in self-contradiction, but a liberalism being perfectly true to its principles, a liberalism that is neutral in the only way it could be and still remain liberal. McConnell's mistake (one he shares with many liberals) is to think that liberal neutrality is, or should be, pure, a practice of making no a priori substantive judgments at all. But liberalism rests on the substantive judgment that the public sphere must be insulated from viewpoints that owe their allegiance not to its procedures—to the unfettered operation of the marketplace of ideas—but to the truths they work to establish. That is what neutrality means in the context of liberalism—a continual pushing away of orthodoxies, of beliefs not open to inquiry and correction—and that is why, in the name of neutrality, religious propositions must either be excluded from the marketplace or admitted only in ceremonial forms, in the form, for example, of a prayer that opens a session of Congress in which the proposals of religion will not be given a serious hearing.

McConnell's true antagonist, then, is not a liberalism gone sour, but liberalism, pure and simple; and his request that liberalism become more liberal—open itself up to forces that do not place openness in the position of highest value—will be resisted because for liberalism to accede to it would be tantamount to committing suicide. What McConnell should want is not an expansion of the marketplace of ideas, but its disbanding and replacement by a regime of virtue as opposed to a regime of process. He should want an end to the public/private split which, by fencing off the arena of political dispute from substantive determinations of value, assures the continual deferral and bracketing of value questions. He should want what Milton wants, a unified conception of life in which the pressure of first principles is felt and responded to twenty-four hours a day.

But so far is McConnell from recognizing the

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shape of his own interests as a committed Christian that he ends his essay by declaring that "the public/private distinction . . . is utterly indispensable to a theory of religious freedom. We cannot have religious freedom without it." One knows what he means: without the public/private split religion will not be protected from state action; were the state not barred from interfering with the free exercise of religion, that freedom might disappear. But of course the freedom thus gained is the freedom to be ineffectual, the freedom "to be confined to the margins of public life—to those areas not important enough to have received the helping or controlling hand of government."

What is not allowed religion under the private public distinction is the freedom to *win*, the freedom not to be separate from the state, but to inform and shape its every action. That idea never even occurs to McConnell because it is so antiliberal and in the end a liberal is what he is. "From a secular point of view," he writes, "it is difficult to appreciate the religious impulse." His essay is a testimony to that difficulty, which registers even here in the use of the word "appreciate," a word borrowed from the vocabulary of taste, a word that falls far short of taking the measure of what the religious impulse, fully felt, might be like.

The same failure characterizes Stephen Carter's *The Culture of Disbelief: How American Law and Politics Trivialize Religious Devotion* (1993), a book that begins by calling religion a "very subversive force," and ends by diluting that force in a theory of accommodation. There are more than a few places where Carter seems to understand that from a secular point of view it is not merely "difficult" but impossible to appreciate the religious impulse. Early on he notes that the invocation of a common rationality (in the manner of a Thomas Nagel or Bruce Ackerman) is a device for limiting the conversation to premises that would "exclude religion from the mix," since, invariably, the "common rationality" will stigmatize as "irrational" the strong claims of religious persons. He also sees that to ask a religious person to rephrase his claims in more mainstream terms is to ask that person to cut himself off from the very source of his conviction and to become in effect the opposite of what he is, to become secular: "The proposed rules to govern discourse in the public square require some members of society to remake themselves before they are allowed to press policy arguments." And at his strongest he points out that the fact-value distinction, which allows theorists to bracket off a public sphere whose deliberations are procedural rather than substantive, is itself a substantive stipulation that has the effect of prejudging what will and will not be considered a fact.

"Liberal epistemology," Carter explains, "is not capable of treating as a factual inquiry a question like 'Can the Jehovah's Witness achieve salvation after receiving a blood transfusion?'—or for that matter, a question like, 'Is there life after death?' " The liberal response would be, of course not: facts are what is verifiable by independent evidence; questions of salvation and life after death are matters of faith. But of course they are both matters of faith, for, as Carter points out, the establishment of a fact depends on "what counts as evidence."

That is to say, evidence is never independent in the sense of being immediately perspicuous; evidence comes into view (or doesn't) in the light of some first premise or "essential axiom" that cannot itself be put to the test because the protocols of testing are established by its pre-assumed authority. A "creationist parent whose child is being taught . . . evolution" protests not in the name of religion and against the witness of fact; he protests in the name of fact as it seems indisputable to him given the "central" truth "that God is real." Given such a "starting point and the methodology" that follows from it, "creationism is as rational an explanation as any other"; or rather (it is the same point from the other direction), given the starting point of a material world that caused itself—the Satanic starting point—evolution is as faith-dependent an explanation as any other. This is not to debunk rationality in favor of faith, but to say that rationality and faith go together in an indissoluble package: you can't have one without the other.

Taken to its conclusions this argument is devastating for the liberal project. For it is only if rationality and faith can be separated that one can establish a public sphere in which issues of civic concern can be discussed by persons who have left their religious convictions at home or checked them at the door. If you can't have one without the other, behind any dispute that occurs will be a conflict of conviction that cannot be rationally settled because it is also and necessarily a conflict of rationalities, and when there is a conflict of rationalities, your only recourse is, well, to conflict since there is no common ground in relation to which dialogue might proceed. Here looms the specter of liberalism's collapse, but Carter will not look it in the face, and in the last part of his book he puts asunder what he had previously joined.

He does this by insisting on a distinction between disagreeing, say, with the religious right or with David Koresh because their positions are "wrong" and disagreeing with them because their positions are presented in religious terms.

> If the Christian right is wrong for America, it must be because its message is wrong on the issues, not because its message is religious. . . . We must be able, in our secular society, to distinguish a critique of the content of a belief from a critique of its source.

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What is remarkable about these statements is that they subscribe fully to the liberal assumptions that have been the object of Carter's critique. Suddenly rationality and faith and, along with them, fact and value *can* be separated, and with separation returns the liberal public sphere and the possibility of assessing agendas without inquiring into the worldviews from which they emerge. As Carter uses the phrase, "wrong on the issues" can only mean wrong on the issues as they are identified apart from anyone's religious convictions; but this assumes that the specification of what the issues in fact *are* can be made uncontroversially. But as Carter himself has argued (when, for example, he points out that in the mind of a creationist parent, his "child is being taught a pack of lies") the reverse is true: in the bitterest debates, it is the very shape of the issues that is in dispute, and what ultimately fuels the dispute, and renders it incapable of resolution, are the incompatible first assumptions—articles of opposing faiths—in the different lights of which the issue takes form.

A pro-life advocate sees abortion as a sin against a God who infuses life at the moment of conception; a pro-choice advocate sees abortion as a decision to be made in accordance with the best scientific opinion as to when the beginning of life, as we know it, occurs. No conversation between them can ever get started because each of them starts from a different place and they could never agree as to what they were conversing *about*. A pro-lifer starts from a belief in the direct agency of a personal God and this belief, this religious conviction, is not incidental to his position; it *is* his position, and determines its features in all their detail. The "content of a belief" is a *function* of its source, and the critique of one will always be the critique of the other. Of course we can and do say, "I don't care where you got that idea from; it's wrong." But what we mean is that we can't see where such an idea came from, and we can't see that because the place it came from is not one where we have ever been; it is the place, the source, we object to even when we fail—we could hardly succeed and be ourselves—to recognize it.

One understands why Carter wants to separate the message from its source: he is bothered by the fact that liberals tend to dismiss certain views just because they are motivated by religious conviction. But when he urges that we bracket the conviction and attend just to the view, he does exactly what he inveighs against: he asks religious persons to "remake themselves before they can legitimately be involved in secular political argument," or, rather, he invites us to remake them when he urges that we receive them respectfully so long as their arguments can be made sense of in secular terms.

When he counsels us to reject Patrick Buchanan's views on the merits and not because they come provided with a "religious justification," he is producing one more example of "how American law and politics trivialize religious devotion." Religious devotion is trivialized when its words are admitted into the forum, but its claims to be not just one truth but *the* truth are disallowed. This "accommodation," as Carter calls it, is the very program of liberalism that will always "accommodate" religious doctrine so as to avoid taking it seriously. Accommodation is a much better strategy than outright condemnation, for it keeps the enemy in sight while depriving it of the (exclusionary) edge that makes it truly dangerous; and best of all, one who accommodates can perform this literally disarming act while proclaiming the most high-sounding pieties.

It is the history of this killing of religion by kindness that is the great subject of George Marsden's *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (1994). The book begins with a question—"How was it that distinctively Christian teaching could be displaced so easily from the substantive role that it held in American higher education for over two centuries and in the universities of Christendom for many centuries before that?"—and then proceeds to answer it in twenty-two closely reasoned and densely packed chapters.

The answer has many components, including the Jeffersonian project of softening sectarian aggressiveness and establishing a general religion of peace, reason, and morality, the identification of common sense philosophy with Christian morality within the assumption that each supported the other, the rise of the cult of the expert whose skills and authority were independent of his character or religious faith, and the substitution for the imperative of adhering to an already-revealed truth the imperative of continuing to search for a truth whose full emergence is located in an ever-receding future.

This last was particularly important because if truth was by definition larger and more inclusive than our present horizons declared it to be, obedience to traditional norms and values was no longer a virtue, but a fault, and a *moral* fault at that.

> The higher truth was an ever progressing ideal toward which the human community . . . always moved, yet never reached. Since truth was by definition always changing, the only thing ultimately sacred was the means of pursuing it. No religious or other dogmatic claim could be allowed to stand in its way.

It is not the business of a university, declared Charles Eliot of Harvard, "to train men for those functions in which implicit obedience is of the first importance. On the contrary, it should train men for those occupations in which self-government, independence, and originating power are preeminently needed." (Or, in Satan's more succinct formulation, "self-

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begot, self-raised.")

As Marsden is quick to note, "Freedom was the principle that tied everything else together." If it is assumed, as it was by many, that the truth to which free inquiry is leading us is the same truth that religion names "God," then, as one cleric put it, "the cause of Christ and the Church is advanced by whatever liberalizes and enriches and enlarges the mind." The more capacious and inclusive the individual consciousness, the closer one is to comprehending the life-principle or soul of the universe. "Hence," Marsden concludes, "any entirely free and honest inquiry into any dimension of reality simply *was* part of true religion."

The only thing excluded, then, was exclusion itself; that is, any position that refused to submit its basic premises to reason's scrutiny. Princeton's Francis Patton declared that "the rationality or rather the reasonableness of a belief is the condition of its credibility." That is, you believe it because reason ratifies it, a view Augustine would have heard with horror, one that John Webster, writing in 1654, rejects as obviously absurd. "But if man gave his assent unto, or believed the things of Christ . . . because they appear probable . . . to his reason, then would his faith be . . . upon the rotten basis of human authority." By the end of the nineteenth century, human authority has been put in the place of revelation; or rather human authority, now identified with the progressive illumination afforded by reason, has become the vehicle of revelation and of a religion that can do very nicely without any strong conception of personal deity.

Of course, this process by which an ethic of free inquiry supplants and liberalizes an older ethic of obedience to settled truth was not without opposition, and Marsden duly records the voices that were raised in protest. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Yale's Noah Porter scoffed at the supposed neutrality and evenhandedness of secular educational theory, which, he pointed out, was its theology: "The question is not whether the college shall or shall not teach theology, but what theology it shall teach—theology according to . . . Moses and Paul or according to Buckle and Draper." By the beginning of this century it was all too evident which of these directions had been taken by American education. In tones recently echoed by conservative polemicists, the editors of *Cosmopolitan* magazine complained in 1909 that

> In hundreds of classrooms it is being taught daily that the decalogue is no more sacred than a syllabus; that the home as an institution is doomed; that there are no absolute evils . . . that the change of one religion to another is like getting a new hat; that moral precepts are passing shibboleths; that conceptions of right and wrong are as unstable as styles of dress.

"The neutrality we have," thundered William Jennings Bryan in 1923, "is often but a sham; it carefully excludes the Christian religion but permits the use of the schoolroom for the destruction of faith and for the teaching of materialistic doctrines." From a quite different perspective, Walter Lippmann agreed: "Reason and free inquiry can be neutral and tolerant only of those opinions which submit to the test of reason and free inquiry." What this means, as Marsden points out, is that "two irreconcilable views of truth and education were at issue"; but of course the issue was never really joined, because the liberal establishment thought of itself as already reconciled to everything and anything and therefore was unable to see how exclusionary its policy of radical *in*clusion really was: "Groups that were excluded, such as Marxists and fundamentalists, often raised the point that they were being excluded by liberal dogmatism, but they were seldom heard."

That they were not heard is hardly surprising, since what they were saying was that a state of "warfare" existed, and warfare—deep conflict over basic and *nonnegotiable* issues—was precisely what liberalism was invented to deny; and it manages that denial by excluding from the tolerance it preaches anyone who will not pledge allegiance to the mimicry of tolerance.

This then is the story Marsden tells, and he tells it with a dispassionate equanimity that sits oddly with the strong point of view he announces in his introduction. "My point of view," he declares, "is that of a fairly traditional Protestant of the reformed theological heritage. One of the features of that heritage is that it has valued education that relates faith to one's scholarship. Particularly important is that beliefs about God, God's creation, and God's will . . . should have impact on scholarship not just in theology, but also in considering other dimensions of human thought and relationships." But in the long narrative that follows, these beliefs become objects of study rather than informing principles of the scholarship. It is as if Marsden had discharged his obligation to his "point of view" simply by announcing it, and can now proceed on his way without being unduly influenced by its values. "It is perfectly possible," he asserts, "to have strong evaluative interests in a subject, and yet treat it fairly and with a degree of detachment."

But it is possible to detach yourself from a "strong evaluative interest" only if you believe in a stage of perception that exists *before* interest kicks in; and not only is that a prime tenet of liberal thought, it is what makes possible the exclusionary move of which Marsden, McConnell, and Carter complain. If such a base-level stage of perception does in fact exist, it can be identified as the common ground in relation to which *uncommon*—that is, not universally shared—convictions (like, for example, Christ is risen) can be

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marginalized and privatized. By claiming to have set aside his strongly held values in deference to the virtue of fairness—a virtue only if you are committed to the priority of procedure over substance—Marsden agrees to play by the rules of the very ideology of which his book is in large part a critique.

He is still playing by those rules in a concluding postscript in which, he tells us, his own interest, hitherto not strongly in play, will be elaborated. He now adds himself to the list of those who complain that "the only points of view . . . allowed full academic credence are those that presuppose purely naturalistic worldviews." The resulting exclusion of religious perspectives, he explains, was justified by the supposed objectivity and neutrality of naturalistic descriptions, but since post-structuralism and post-modernism have denied the claims of any discourse to be objective and neutral, "there seems no intellectually valid reason to exclude religiously based perspectives." This, however, is a self-defeating argument because it amounts to saying that when it comes to proof, religious perspectives are no worse off than any other. It is an argument from weakness—yes, religious thought is without objective ground, but so is everything else; we are all in the same untethered boat—and if a religious perspective were to gain admittance on *that* basis, it would have forfeited its claim to be anything other than a "point of view," a subjective preference, a mere opinion. It would have joined the universe of liberal discourse but at the price of not being taken seriously. If a religious perspective is included because there is "no intellectually valid reason" to exclude it, neither will there be any intellectually valid reason to affirm it, except as one perspective among others, rather than as the perspective that is true, and because true, controlling.

That is what Marsden should want: not the inclusion of religious discourse in a debate no one is allowed to win, but the triumph of religious discourse and the silencing of its atheistic opponents. To invoke the criterion of intellectual validity and seek shelter under its umbrella is to surrender in advance to the enemy, to that liberal rationality whose inability even to recognize the claims of faith has been responsible for religion's marginalization in the first place. Marsden wants to argue against that marginalization, but his suggestion for removing it is in fact a way of reinforcing it. He calls it "procedural rationality." The procedure is to scrutinize religious viewpoints and distinguish between those that "honor some basic rules of evidence and argument" and those that "are presented so dogmatically and aggressively as not to be accommodated within the procedural rules of pluralistic academia."

One could hardly imagine a better formula for subordinating the religious impulse to the demands of civil and secular order. Presumably it will not be religion that specifies what the rules of evidence and argument to be honored are; and it surely will not be religion that stigmatizes as dogma any assertion that does not conform to the requirements of those rules. Dogma, of course, is a word that once had a positive meaning: it meant the unqualified assertion of a priori truths and was indistinguishable from a truly strong religiosity. It is only under the liberal dispensation that dogma acquires the taint of obdurateness, of a culpable refusal to submit to the test of reasonableness as defined by the standards and norms of the civil establishment.

It is no accident that Marsden here begins to speak of the "enforcement of rules of civility," of rules that protect the flow of conversation from those who would bring it to an authoritative conclusion, for in spite of his profession of religious faith, civility has become his religion. When civility is embraced as a prime value, tolerance and freedom cannot be far behind, and it is in the name of this quintessentially liberal trinity that Marsden makes his appeal in the closing pages of a book that began by invoking the will of God.

In the end Marsden's own argument enacts the journey he has been describing, from a religious conviction so strong that it requires no justification to a religious impulse so weakened that he can say of it, without any irony, that it poses "scarcely any danger" to the ideal of "free inquiry." On the back of the jacket cover one prepublication reviewer predicts that "George Marsden's book will raise hackles." It is not clear whether that is an expression of anxiety or hope; what is clear is that whichever it is, it will not be realized.

What does it all mean? What can we conclude from these examples of three intelligent and learned men who lament the trivialization of religious discourse at the hands of liberal rationalism, but who turn to the vocabulary of that same rationalism when it comes time to offer remedies and alternatives? One thing we can conclude is that in the end McConnell, Carter, and Marsden are moved more by what they fear than by what they desire. What they desire is the full enfranchisement of religious conviction. What they fear is the full enfranchisement of religious conviction, for if the religious impulse were unchecked by the imperatives of civility, tolerance, and freedom of inquiry, the result would be the open conflict the Enlightenment was designed to blunt.

It is simply too late in the day to go back; as a member of one of Carter's audiences put it, "We already had the Enlightenment" and religion lost. The loss is not simply a matter of historical fact: it is inscribed in the very consciousness of those who live in its wake. That is why we see the spectacle of men like McConnell, Carter, and Marsden, who set out to restore the priority of the good over the right but find the protocols of the right—of liberal proceduralism—written in the fleshly tables of their hearts. FT

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Why We Can Get Along

Richard John Neuhaus

"The religious person should not seek an accommodation with liberalism; he should seek to rout it from the field, to extirpate it, root and branch." That is bracing stuff.

Professor Fish makes a very important argument about, inter alia, religion, reason, liberalism, and tolerance. I will not offer a point by point response to his article, but will develop along rather different lines some of the questions that he so provocatively raises. (Quotes that are not attributed are from Professor Fish's essay.)

The usual secularist telling of the story of modern freedom is that liberal democracy, with its devotion to civility and tolerance, is most importantly an achievement secured in opposition to the truth claims of religion. There is, let it be admitted, some historical justification for that way of telling the story. For the liberal project to advance, truth-claiming religion must retreat or be vanquished. Many Christians agree with that way of telling the story. They suspect, although they may not say so, that their faith is incompatible with a liberal regime. They put up with tolerance, they tolerate tolerance, but they have an uneasy conscience about it. If they had the courage of their convictions, they tell themselves, they would be aggressively intolerant of those who do not accept the truth that they know to be true. Perhaps they even experience a pleasurable frisson at the thought of forcefully overturning liberalism's table rather than politely taking a seat.

There is no doubt that the dominant rules of liberal discourse, especially in sectors of the academy, militate against any claims to truth, and not only religious truth. But the hostility to truth that is identified as religious is especially sharp. Many and seductive are the ways in which the ostensible acceptance of religion at liberalism's table can mean, in fact, the gelding of religion. If the opponents of religion cannot exclude it completely, they are practiced in the arts of coopting and neutralizing it. This they feel they have to do because authentic religion is threatening. It raises, for instance, the question of faith, and most liberal secularists are in deep denial about their articles of faith and acts of faith. Religious truth also proposes a comprehensive meaning system that offends and threatens those who insist that no one reading of reality should, as they say, be privileged.

The offense and threat of religion goes deep. It forces, for instance, the fundamental decision as to whether we are "self-made" or "created," and the logic of that decision, one way or the other, has consequences that are not under our control. Not just what currently passes for liberalism but the liberal regime itself must, as its critics say, vanquish, exclude, or coopt the challenge of principled antiliberalism. The interesting question is whether religion necessarily poses such a challenge to the liberal regime. According to one reading of John Stuart Mill and the liberal tradition, religion is incompatible with liberalism because it requires obedience to authority, and obedience to authority is incompatible with the open-endedly critical mindset required by the liberal view of freedom. An alternative claim that needs to be considered is that obedience to authority can be not the surrender of freedom but the exercise of freedom in response to truth. It may be that that truth, in turn, does not end the civil conversation but sustains it through history until, as Christianity holds, the fullness of truth is undeniably obvious to all.

In exploring these questions, we should know what we mean by liberalism. Both its critics and its champions frequently identify liberalism with one strand of the tradition that goes by that name, and with habits of mind and behavior currently called liberal. John Stuart Mill's liberalism condemns what Mill takes to be religion's demand that one submit

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uncritically to the will of God. A critic of liberalism such as Stanley Fish commends that demand, at least for the religious. For both Mill and Fish, religion is the enemy of the autonomous individual, which Mill thinks is bad and Fish thinks is good. In contrast to both, I will suggest that Christianity proposes a more complex and interesting idea of the responsible person acting in obedience to truth.

But first we must know what liberalism we are talking about. According to one liberal doctrine, the liberal regime is based on belief in the autonomy of the individual, historical progress, the essential goodness of man, and public skepticism about moral truth. The liberal regime of, for instance, the American constitutional order is very different from that, and the difference is a difference of kind. Its origins, doctrines, and practices are explicated by, for instance, *The Federalist Papers* and Tocqueville. The religious foundation and development of this kind of liberal regime are traced by historians such as A. D. Lindsay, while theologians such as Reinhold Niebuhr and John Courtney Murray have in recent times explored with great care its presuppositions and practice. This kind of liberal regime is based on a belief in the responsible person in communities of legitimate interest, and in man's capacity for good ambiguously joined to his inclination to evil. It is agnostic about historical progress, and understands itself to be premised upon public truths, as in "We hold these truths to be self-evident. . . ." Such truths, in turn, are derived from and point to authority that transcends the regime itself, as in "Nature and Nature's God."

Currently dominant modes of liberalism, on the other hand, subscribe to a mindless open-mindedness that precludes commitment to existing truth because truth is, as Fish says, "located in an ever-receding future." Critics of this kind of liberalism, however, must be careful not to fall into the trap of pitting commitment to truth (religious or otherwise) against critical thought, for they thus end up in giving liberalism a copyright on man's critical faculties. Critical thought is hardly an invention of liberalism. Plato, Aristotle, Augustine (to whom I shall return), Maimonides, and Aquinas were wondrously familiar with the rules of reason, evidence, and critical judgment long before James Mill blessed the world with his prodigious son.

The proponents of a liberalism that puts truth forever on hold are undoubtedly powerful in our culture, but I do not think the liberal field in its entirety "is already theirs." Nor should we concede to nine unelected lawyers on the Supreme Court the right to define the liberal tradition. In many ignorantly arrogant dictates of the last fifty years, the Court has indeed presumed to divorce public life from religion, from religiously grounded moral truth, and from truth itself. To the extent that these dictates are the law of the land, we may say with Mr. Bumble that the law is an ass. The fact that more and more Americans are saying that is at the heart of what some of us have called the Kulturkampf in which our society is embroiled, and likely will be embroiled for decades to come. Very much at the heart of this battle is a contest over conflicting definitions of the liberal regime.

A corrupt form of liberalism that some take to be normative for liberalism *tout court* has many tangled roots, and perhaps none more tangled than confusions about the relationship between faith and reason, authority and truth. It is a serious mistake, typical of this kind of liberalism, to suggest that religious decisions are arbitrary, while secular or nonreligious decisions are reasoned. Another kind of liberalism—usually associated today with fashions called postmodernist—suggests that all really fundamental decisions are arbitrary. Thus, for example, Stanley Fish says that in *Paradise Lost* there is no way of adjudicating between Adam and Satan when it comes to the decision for or against God.

This seems to me highly doubtful. Whether then or now, the assertion that the universe caused itself is incoherent and therefore implausible. The same is true of the assertion that my consciousness is not necessarily related to the consciousness of others, and finally of an Other. Of course there is not space to argue these claims here. Suffice it that one's decision for a "first premise" is a reasoned decision. It is sophistry to say that in that case one's real commitment is to reason and not to God. The fact is that my decision for God is truly *my* decision. Because I am, among other things, a rational person—in light of the decision for God I should say, "Because God has made me a rational creature"—no decision is truly mine unless my reason is engaged in the making of it.

In our reasoning, we begin with basic decisions that have a strong bearing on where we end up. But it is misleading to say that, for example between Adam and Satan, each begins with an act of faith—a commitment to a first premise—"and then each begins to reason in ways dictated by the content of his faith." Also misleading is the statement that "In the absence of a fixed commitment—of a first premise that cannot be the object of thought because it is the enabling condition of thought—cognitive activity cannot get started." What is in play with such statements is the currently fashionable notion that people live in, as it is said, realities created by incommensurable traditions of discourse. Incommensurable means that there can be no accurate translation from one discourse into the other. This view usually goes by the name of anti-foundationalism. There is no foundation that is shared by those committed to opposing first premises; they are incapable of agreeing or disagreeing because neither can know what the other is talking about. This view is espoused by some who are critics of liberalism, but it is in a crucial respect a variation of liberalism in that it puts

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the question of truth forever on hold.

It is important not to confuse "first premises" with the laws or rules by which logic works. People committed to opposing major premises are not thereby operating by opposing systems of logic. We can agree that Adam and Satan hold opposing major premises without agreeing that they hold opposing views about how one then reasons from whichever premise one holds. Nor is it the case, as Professor Fish would have it, that their opposing first premises "cannot be derived from anything in the visible scene; it must be imported—on no evidentiary basis whatsoever."

Such statements confuse the deductive logic by which the syllogism works with the inductive logic by which we construct universal propositions out of imperfect and partial experience. A universal major premise—for instance, Aristotle's "All men are mortal"—can be based on generalization drawn from partial experience. I haven't seen all men die, but I've seen enough men die to reasonably hold that all men are mortal. Of course, there are universal major premises that are true, as the logicians say, "by definition": "All cows are mammals," "No cats are dogs," and so forth. It is arguable that these statements may be held with "no evidentiary basis whatsoever." But with respect to universal major premises that we hold by induction from partial evidence, it is obvious that we start with some evidence that we think supports them. And it follows that people who accept opposing premises can reasonably talk about that evidence.

Also important is the distinction between the falsity of a proposition and the inability to conceive a proposition. There are many things that I think are false but not logically impossible. We encounter propositions all the time that we can quite well understand but happen to believe are not true. For instance: "Jesus never lived," "Christians are intolerant," or "St. Augustine sacrificed reason to faith." Whether the proposition "God does not exist" is logically possible is a much disputed question. (Anselm thought it an impossible proposition, while Aquinas thought it false but possible under some definitions of possibility.) In any event, a Christian can understand what a liberal atheist is saying, and can even imagine what the world would be like if what the atheist says were true, without believing a word of it.

There are numerous problems with the idea that opposing first premises necessarily result in incommensurable discourses that make it impossible for people to understand one another. Were that the case, a non-Christian could not understand the poetry of the very Christian John Milton, but in fact non-Christians such as Stanley Fish are recognized as authorities on Milton. Were that the case, the Christian Milton could not depict the reasonings of both Satan and Adam in a way that enables the reader to see both positions. Then too, if Adam and Satan, if Christians and liberals, have systems of reasoning that have nothing in common, we could not call them both "systems of reasoning." To call them systems of reasoning is to assert that they have in common the fact that they both belong to the genus called "systems of reasoning"—which of course they do. Finally, the person who wants to make the point that nobody can stand outside his belief system and compare it to another belief system has to stand outside belief systems and compare them to one another. In other words, he has to do what he says cannot be done.

In thinking about the connections between faith, reason, and discourse, St. Augustine is particularly helpful. It is possible to find snippets, especially from his devotional and homiletical writings, that can be used to suggest that Augustine is a fideist, someone who sacrifices reason to faith. But that would be a grave misunderstanding. Augustine addressed with great sophistication why it is that faith is reasonable and why it is that reason without faith is incomplete. There is, for instance, the very engaging essay, *The Usefulness of Believing*. The very title reflects Augustine's assumption that Christian and non-Christian are able to consider together what would be useful in understanding the truth. Augustine makes the case that belief is necessary for understanding. He explains in great detail to his unbelieving interlocutor the reasonable case for believing. It is clear that Augustine and his interlocutor share a common "a priori" in what they mean by reason and reasons. The argument is that belief is necessary to understanding—in everyday life, in science, in friendship, and in matters religious—and why belief is necessary is itself rationally explicable.

"Understand my word in order to believe," says Augustine, "but believe God's word in order to understand." As Etienne Gilson writes in *The Christian Philosophy of St. Augustine*, "[In Augustine] the very possibility of faith depends on reason . . . because only reason is capable of belief." Again, "The Augustinian doctrine concerning the relations between reason and faith comprises three steps: preparation for faith by reason, act of faith, understanding of the content of faith." But Augustine himself said it best: "No one believes anything unless he first thought it to be believable. Everything which is believed should be believed after thought has preceded. Not everyone who thinks believes, since many think in order not to believe; but everyone who believes thinks." Augustine was a firm opponent of what would later come to be called fideism. The claim that faith is utterly arbitrary—that it is not supported by and cannot appeal to an a priori about what is reasonable—finds no support in Augustine or, for that matter, in the mainstream of the Great Tradition of Christian thought.

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In this century, Michael Polanyi in particular has demonstrated that human thought, and especially scientific thought, can get nowhere without acts of faith. At the same time, reason can always revisit the reasons for the act of faith. Whether in science or in religion, one does not have to take time out from believing, one does not have to become a temporary unbeliever, in order to reexamine the reasons for believing. It is not the most important reason why I am a Christian, but one reason I am a Christian is that Christianity makes more sense of more facts than any other way of construing reality that I know of. And yes, that assumes that the non-Christian and I have a similar, and in most cases an identical, way of determining what counts as a fact. It is also my reason that tells me that Dante was right: "Even when supported by the senses, reason has short wings" (*Paradiso*, canto 2).

As reason is incomplete without faith, so also reason is not alien to faith. The religious question is that of the whole person being ordered to truth, and to the absolute truth who is God. Reason participates in the Divine wisdom, the Logos (Jesus Christ) by whom and for whom all things were made. In the First Letter of Peter, Christians are exhorted to be always ready to give a reason for their hope, which assumes that there are intelligible reasons to be given. It is not the case that the reasonable mind is the "closed mind." True, St. Paul says that our minds are to be taken captive to Christ, but in this view such captivity is perfect freedom, for when reason is ordered to truth the promise of Jesus is fulfilled, "You will know the truth and the truth will make you free." The reasonable mind is the mind opened to truth. Of course, we are always "free" to reject the truth, but such an exercise of "freedom" is in fact bondage to error. The decision, in sum, is not between faith and reason but between the truth or falsehood of Jesus' claim that he is "the way, the truth, and the life."

I am speaking, of course, about Christianity, rather than about "religious conviction" in general. Whether Christianity is a religion at all some, such as Karl Barth, have sharply disputed; but there is no doubt that generic religion is not Christianity. (The argument could be made that the relationship between Christian conviction and liberalism is true also for Jewish conviction and liberalism, but I will leave that argument for others.) Professor Fish asserts that "the religious impulse, fully felt" would lead one to want the public world to be controlled by "a unified conception of life in which the pressure of first principles is felt and responded to twenty-four hours a day." Christianity does propose a unified conception of life, but that unified conception of life comprehends and makes possible the pluralistic character of life as we experience it.

A unified conception of life does not require monism. John Courtney Murray said that pluralism is written into the script of history, and I would add that it seems God did the writing. By pluralism, I mean a world in which people live by significantly different accounts of reality, including moral and religious reality, and must learn to live together. Given the variousness built into creation—and especially into people and cultures—ours would be a pluralistic world even if everybody on earth became Christian, for there are obviously and necessarily different ways of being Christian. "Unity in diversity" is a maxim affirmed by both Catholics and Protestants in ecumenical discussions. There is argument about the degrees and kinds of permissible diversity, but that is precisely the point: people in quite different traditions can argue about it and know what they are arguing about. Just as believers and nonbelievers can know what they are arguing about.

The Christian understanding of reason, faith, and how the world is created to be is the best guard against the totalitarianism, whether liberal or religious, that is invited by a monistic view of reality. There is a large overlap between ultimate truths (about, for example, God, creation, human nature, and redemption) and penultimate truths (about, for example, jurisprudence, medicine, and how to make a really good martini). That this should be the case does not surprise the Christian for, after all, all the world is of God's making. However partial our knowledge, and however stumbling our ability to communicate, we finally do all participate in one discourse, the one Logos of the mind of God. This gives the Christian confidence that he can enter into conversation with the non-Christian. In this view, what is religious—or at least what is Christian—is not posited against the secular, for this age (*saeculum*) and all ages belong to God. Therefore, when Christians in conversation with non-Christians "rephrase" what they want to say, they are not necessarily surrendering to the opposition. The reason and language of the non-Christian, when rightly exercised, is ordered to the same truth. The Christian therefore tries in various ways to enter into the reason and language of non-Christians in order to help reorder them to truth.

With respect to moral questions in the public realm, this participation in which all rational creatures share is what Catholics mean by natural law and other Christians call by different names—for example, general revelation as distinct from special revelation or common grace as distinct from saving grace. In the civil and political realms, it is, as a result of this common participation, both possible and necessary for Christians to use a language also used by non-Christians. Luther is said to have said (although he probably didn't), "I would rather be ruled by a wise Turk than by a foolish Christian." The point is that a wise Turk would better under-

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stand the penultimate (and antepenultimate) truths pertinent to the ordering of political life.

Intellectuals who "rephrase" their language in order to enter the liberal conversation are accused of betraying their own "interests" as Christians. They should not want to enter the marketplace of ideas, it is said, but to shut it down. To which these intellectuals might respond that it is their interest and their duty to try to transform the marketplace, but before transforming it they must gain entry, and to gain entry they must demonstrate that they understand the existing liberal rules that need to be changed. This is a tricky game, and, unless one is exceedingly careful, it is all too easy to fall into the trap of being coopted by the very liberalism one set out to transform. Whether that is the case with the writers so sharply criticized by Stanley Fish is debatable. Christians who write on these matters would no doubt write more precisely if they knew that gimlet-eyed critics were waiting in the wings, ready to pounce gleefully upon their every turn of phrase.

My point is that talk about a "conflict of rationalities" must be sharply tempered. As we have seen, opposing premises need not mean opposing ways of reasoning. The so-called conflict of rationalities does not, to use the phrase of Richard Rorty, "go all the way down." There is a level at which conflict can be replaced by conversation, and only by entering the exchange of ideas can one discover where that level might be. There are preliminary moves appropriate to what some Christians call "pre-evangelization." The venerable precedent is St. Paul in the Areopagus of Athens (Acts 17). You engage people at the point where they are engageable and then hope that they can be moved, step by step, toward the fullness of truth. It doesn't always work, of course.

Similarly tactical is making the "debating point" that the vaunted inclusiveness of liberalism is actually exclusive of religious truth claims, and perhaps of truth claims as such. It is not merely a debating point. Making the exclusion argument can put the arrogance and intolerance of liberalism on the defensive, forcing liberals to face the incoherence of their dogmatic commitment to unqualified open-mindedness. On the other hand, some liberals of a stridently anti-foundationalist view are not at all embarrassed by that incoherence. Rorty, for instance, merrily declares that his "ironic liberalism" is but a game and people who disrupt the game by claiming that their truths are, well, really true should simply be declared crazy and constrained from causing public mischief.

Nonetheless, Christians persist in trying to create a conversation and keep it going. Christians cannot counter liberal intolerance with Christian intolerance, for Christian truth makes tolerance morally imperative. In the Christian view, tolerance is not a compromise of truth but obedience to truth. As I have written elsewhere: We do not kill one another over our disagreements about the will of God because it is the will of God that we not kill one another over our disagreements about the will of God. While we cannot get around using it, "tolerance" is not the right word. The Christian is enjoined to exercise humility, forbearance, patience—in a word, love. But, for purposes of this discussion, we can call it tolerance.

This tolerance is made necessary by two factors: cognitive humility and love for neighbor. The Christian truth about God, man, and the world of which we are part includes the truth that we are not the masters of all the truth there is. For starters, there is original sin, which distorts and disorders also our reason. The truth about sin helps us understand why we frequently fail to understand. Then there is what we might call the eschatological proviso. Now we see through a glass darkly; only in the Kingdom of God will we know as we are known (1 Corinthians 13). This is not a matter of locating truth "in an ever-receding future." It is knowing that the fullness of our grasp of the truth is in an ever-oncoming future.

Cognitive humility is joined to love of neighbor. The Second Vatican Council's declaration on religious freedom is titled *Dignitatis Humanae*. Respect for the dignity of the other person created in the image of God requires that we not silence or exclude him but try to persuade him. Authentic faith can never be coerced; assent to the truth must be an act of freedom. *Dignitatis Humanae* asserts, "The truth cannot impose itself except by virtue of its own truth, as it makes its entrance into the mind at once quietly and with power." Or, as John Paul II says in the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (The Mission of the Redeemer), "The Church imposes nothing; she only proposes." I hardly need add that Christians have not always understood that, and it is not understood by some Christians even today. It is by no means a new doctrine, however. The understanding of the dignity of the person and the necessary freedom of the act of faith helps explain why—secularist propaganda to the contrary—Christianity, when it has possessed the power to persecute and exclude, has been singularly tolerant of those who reject its teachings. Anyone who doubts that is invited to examine the history of other religions and worldviews when they are in power.

And yet there is a certain plausibility to the claim that, if people are seriously religious, they should not tolerate error. Catholic teachers used to say that "Error has no rights." The difficulty is that errors are attached to persons, and persons do have rights. Only persons can, by their own free decision, detach themselves from their errors. Meanwhile, we must put up with them or tolerate them or, much better, respect and love them. Although apparently bound to their errors, each is capable of knowing the truth and thus of becoming truly free. We do not know what the Holy Spirit is doing with people. We do have a

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promise that God's word will not return empty (Isaiah 55:11). The Christian's job is simply to bear witness to the truth, and to do that you first have to get within speaking distance of those who need to hear the truth, which is to say you try to enter into conversation.

Conversation requires civility. I suppose it could be said of a Christian or two whom I know that "civility is his religion." But I do not think it can fairly be said, for example, of George Marsden when he contends against the exclusion of religion from the university. There are religiously imperative reasons for being civil that do not entail turning civility into a religion. In this connection, too, I think we should understand the person at Stephen Carter's lecture who says that we had the Enlightenment and religion lost. That is not true. We had, inter alia, the wars of religion, the Enlightenment, the further development of Christian doctrine about faith and freedom—and religious coercion lost. Religious coercion lost for many reasons, the most important being that Christians recognized that it is incompatible with what they believe as Christians. Religious freedom is mainly an achievement of religion. It is hard to believe that any sensible person today would want to revive the coercion of belief. Rather, we need to resist it where it still survives and flourishes—as in the Middle East, in large parts of Eastern Europe, in China, and in secular liberalism's intolerance of religion.

Christians have a duty to make the free market of ideas freer still. Since God is one, truth is one, and we owe obedience to all that is true. The liberal clerics and university heads of the nineteenth century were right in saying that Christians have nothing to fear from truth. Their tragic error was in subordinating revelation to truth defined as a "progressive illumination" offered by a truncated view of reason. It is the same error that is found in the motto of some liberal Christians of our time, "The world sets the agenda for the Church." That can be understood in an unobjectionable way, but typically it means that Christianity should adapt itself to and be conformed to a liberal notion of truth that ends up in putting truth forever on hold. Orthodox Christian teaching is that the ultimate truth has already appeared in the past—in the covenant with Abraham, at Sinai, and, preeminently, in Jesus Christ. The oncoming manifestation of the fullness of truth is not coming for the first time. That's why Christians call it the Second Coming. In this view, the mind that is open to the truth is obedient to the tradition that bears witness to what has been and anticipates what will be. In the final analysis, everyone must find his place in a tradition, and it is indeed one of the more galling conceits of liberal antitraditionalism that it refuses to admit that it is a tradition. (On this score, Alasdair MacIntyre has provided us with the best critique of liberalism.)

Christians need not worry that, when they engage in conversation with others, "it will not be religion that specifies what the rules of evidence and argument to be honored are." That two plus two equals four is true can be agreed on by Christian and non-Christian alike; it requires no reference to a religious specification, although the Christian will note that it does testify to the coherence of God's creation. What Christians know to be the truth does exclude some views that claim to be true. Evolution is an interesting example. Thoughtful Christians are divided on whether some form of evolution may be involved in the development of species, but they are united in rejecting evolution as a materialistic worldview premised upon the "Satanic" idea that the universe caused itself. Even here, however, they need not reject that worldview on specifically Christian grounds, since it is quite insupportable by "the rules of evidence and argument" that reasonable people employ with respect to almost all other questions. (For the Carl Sagans and other village atheists, materialistic evolution is clearly a faith commitment which they appear to be incapable of subjecting to critical examination.)

One might ask whether this Christian confidence in the unity of truth means that Christianity, too, can be "falsified" by the prevailing "rules of evidence and argument." At a purely theoretical level, I think the answer is yes. Were a corpse to be identified beyond reasonable doubt as that of Jesus of Nazareth, essential Christian truth claims would be in very deep trouble. If at the end of history Christ does not return to establish the Kingdom of God, it will be clear that Christians got it all wrong. The first has not happened, and Christians are confident that it will not happen. In the event of the second, nobody will be around to point out the Christian error. Meanwhile, Christians live, with full deliberation, by faith and not by sight. Christian confidence is supported also by very long experience with challenges to the faith. Consider, to take but one example, that after two hundred years of systematically destructive criticism, the person of Jesus comes off pretty much today the way the Gospels depict him and the Christian tradition remembers him. My point is that we do not need any specifically Christian "rules of evidence and argument." Our problem—not qua Christians but as reasonable people—is with an overweening liberalism that arbitrarily limits what counts as evidence and argument, and is in deep denial about its own acts of faith.

This brings us to a factor that is critical to the entire argument. Liberalism's table of public discourse is, for Christians, neither the only nor the most important table. Far from it. The most important table is the eucharistic table at which Christ is faithfully present to his pilgrim people who there anticipate the wedding feast of the Lamb in the final

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consummation. It follows that, for Christians, the community gathered at that table—the Church—is the most important community. It is also the only community that can be and should be "controlled" by the fullness of Christian truth. It would be nice if the whole world could be controlled by that truth, but, short of the Kingdom, that goal is inherently contradictory; it could only be done by coercive means that violate the freedom of the act of faith by which alone one comes to know the truth that makes us free.

Because there are different tables, a liberal regime that Christians can affirm (for instance, the American constitutional order) assumes that the most important questions are not and should not be political. Dr. Johnson (and Oliver Goldsmith) had it right: "How small, of all that human hearts endure, That part which laws or kings can cause or cure!" I would add, though, that laws and kings can cause a great deal of grief, which is why we should be thankful for the liberal regime, which means, most crucially, limited government. More precisely, the liberal regime means a limited state, with self-governance exercised by the many communities gathered at different tables. The regime is not to be equated with the state. The state is but one, albeit very important, part of the regime.

This understanding of the liberal regime makes no sense to those liberals who assume that there is only one table, one discourse, one community. For such monists, "public discourse" is the only discourse there is; it must try to deal with all the important questions of life. When it discovers that public agreement on some important truths is not possible, it is faced with the choice of civil warfare or an agreement to put conflicting truths on permanent hold. Debased liberalism opts for the latter, which is why the liberal "community" established by its rules is so very shallow and desiccated. By limiting themselves to the liberal table where the gruel is so very thin, liberals are deprived of the nourishment of much richer traditions of moral wisdom, including two millennia of Christian thought. 'Tis a pity.

The complaint is heard that, because it divorces "facts" from "values," liberal politics brackets the question of moral truth. Those who live their lives in the political order—who have only one table at which to sit—understandably find this very unsatisfactory. I suggest, however, that it is a very good thing that the political order—the sphere of "laws and kings"—should try to bracket questions of moral truth, to the extent possible and consistent with the common good. The state has little competence—competence meaning both authority and ability—to determine questions of moral truth. And yet it sometimes must do so. There are, for example, the constituting truths that we hold to be self-evident. Among those truths is the truth that the state should restrain itself, as much as possible, from defining moral truth.

The public truths officially determined are, in today's jargon, "thin" rather than "thick" truths. It is good that we say that we are a nation "under God," thus pointing to the Supreme Sovereignty by which the sovereignty of the state is limited. It would be a very bad idea to make a "thicker" official declaration; for example, that we are a nation "under God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." Neither should we say that we are a "Christian nation" (except demographically), not because the people in a democracy do not have the constitutional right to make such an official declaration but because the nation is not worthy of the title, and Christians would be foolish to tie the name of their ultimate allegiance to this or any other political enterprise. That, as I understand it, is one of the things Our Lord meant when he said his kingdom is not of this world.

The limited state of the liberal regime is not wired to handle high-voltage questions of moral truth. In the last century, the question of slavery overloaded the system and the government was brought to ruin in civil warfare. The same may be happening today on the question of abortion. It is noteworthy that the pro-life movement makes a very precise and public argument. Christians do believe many things about the dignity and destiny of human life, but the public pro-life position begins with the indisputable fact—a fact not questioned by any reputable scientist—that a human life begins with fertilization and ends with death. It is the pro-choice position, not the pro-life position, that introduces a "value judgment" with respect to the "quality of life" that must be achieved in order to warrant legal protection.

The abortion debate—as some pro-choice proponents are now reluctantly beginning to acknowledge—is not about when human life begins but about who belongs to the community for which we accept common responsibility, and about the criteria by which we exclude some and include others. When that is recognized, a serious debate about abortion can get started. Maybe. It may also be that our polity cannot handle such a heavy-duty question. In any event, the question will not go away, and, if we do come to ruin because of it, the chief responsibility rests with a Supreme Court that illegitimately and arrogantly abolished abortion law in America—and with a liberal establishment that has with such uncompromising fanaticism championed *Roe* and its judicial offspring. I believe Professor Fish is wrong when he says, "No conversation between [the sides] can ever get started because each of them starts from a different place and they could never agree as to what they were conversing *about*." A generation or two from now, I am reasonably confident, our society will be as clear-minded about the evil of abortion as it is today about the evil of slavery, and then there will be no doubt about who had the better of the argument during these morally confused years.

No matter how limited the state, and no matter

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how much we restrict the sphere of the political, we still have to deal in public with substantive questions of moral moment. Those liberals are in error who claim that ours is or can be a purely procedural democracy. Aristotle said that politics is the deliberation of the question, How ought we to order our life together? That is inescapably a moral question, and in this liberal regime it is to be answered by the people—mainly around the many tables of the mediating institutions of civil society, and only when necessary through representative political institutions.

In the political order, the principle is majority rule with minority protections, which means it is an awkward and inefficient system that typically comes up with answers that do not entirely satisfy anybody. But Christians are not surprised by that since, short of the Kingdom, nothing is entirely satisfactory. They certainly do not expect to be satisfied at the table of politics, no matter who sits at the head of the table. The liberal regime, however, can provide a rough approximation of justice that allows people to get on with more important business—worshiping God, building families, trying to be decent to others, engaging in good arguments, making a living, and rooting for the Yankees.

The pitting of freedom against truth is the original sin of the liberalism that we must oppose. The truth about freedom is that there is no freedom apart from truth. The truth claims I have proposed do not stop the conversation but provide the firmest foundation for sustaining it. A particularly compelling statement of the theory and practice of liberal democracy is the 1991 encyclical *Centesimus Annus* (The Hundredth Year), in which John Paul II observes:

> Today there is a tendency to claim that agnosticism and skeptical relativism are the philosophy and basic attitude which correspond to democratic forms of political life. Those who are convinced that they know the truth and firmly adhere to it are considered unreliable from a democratic point of view, since they do not accept that truth is determined by the majority, or that it is subject to variation according to different political trends. It must be observed in this regard that if there is no ultimate truth to guide and direct political activity, then ideas and convictions can easily be manipulated for reasons of power. As history demonstrates, a democracy without moral truth easily turns into open or thinly disguised totalitarianism.

Of course there is no end to the debate about what constitutes the liberal regime, which is part of its appeal. We can argue these matters until the cows come home and there will still be many questions unresolved. But that is no cause for despair. In the end, we can trust God to tie up the loose ends. As St. Augustine would say, that is yet another good reason for believing.

Lest anyone mistake this argument for a roundabout defense of contemporary liberalism's indifference to truth and facile agreement to disagree, they should know that it is grounded in the supreme and indispensable confidence, celebrated at the table of the Lord, that St. Paul had it right when he declared, "Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:10-11).

In the meantime—in the time short of the time when that truth will be evident to all—we can, by the grace of God and the logic of that truth, try to get along. FT

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Stanley Fish replies to Richard John Neuhaus

Father Neuhaus mistakes my position when he says (or implies) that I pit freedom of inquiry against truth or critical thought against a commitment to truth, or, more simply, faith against reason. In fact I don't regard these as opposed to one another (they are not binaries) but as mutually interdependent. The difference between a believer and a nonbeliever is not that one reasons and the other doesn't, but that one reasons from a first premise the other denies; and from this difference flow others that make the fact that both are reasoning a sign not of commonality but of its absence.

If, as Neuhaus says, a secularist liberal and a committed Christian recognize and deploy the same "rules of reason, evidence, and critical judgment," sooner or later they will disagree about whether something is or is not evidence or about what it is evidence *of*, and such disagreements cannot be resolved by the rules of reason because the rules of reason unfold in relation to a proposition they do not generate. That proposition—God exists or he doesn't, Christ is the word made flesh or he isn't, human nature is perfectible or it isn't—is an article of faith, and while two persons proceeding within opposing faiths might perform identical operations of logical entailment, they will end up in completely different places because it is from different (substantive) places that they began.

Let me turn again for an example to Milton. In Book VI of *Paradise Lost*, Satan's rebels and God's loyalists meet on the field of battle, but even to say this is to understate the level of their disagreement, since in the eyes of the loyalists this isn't a battle at all—they know, as one of them declares, that God could have "at one blow / Unaided" settled the matter—while the possibility that there could be a battle—that God might, after all, be just the self-bestowed name of a boastful antagonist—is absolutely central to the rebels' perspective, a perspective that determines both what will be seen by them as evidence and the conclusions they draw from it. This is no less true of the loyalists for whom evidence also emerges not in its own independent shape but in the shape given to it by the structure of their belief.

In the course of the "battle," both parties meet with events that one might think could lead them to alter their basic commitments. The rebels for the first time experience pain and fear; but they respond by incorporating these new experiences into their sense of themselves as battling heroically against steep odds in what Satan has earlier named "the strife of glory." The strife is glorious because (in their eyes) it is a struggle for independence in the face of a tyrant who demands their submission; and the fact that this tyrant has now been able to invent pain is received by them not as evidence that they should desist, but as evidence that confirms their self-image—the odds are even worse than we thought and yet we bravely fight on—and strengthens their resolve—if we can endure this, we can endure anything.

On the other side, the loyalists find themselves in a position that might "reasonably" be called humiliating. They are in the field because God has told them that as a reward for their loyalty they will have the honor and pleasure of driving the rebels "out from . . . bliss, / Into their place of punishment"; but as it turns out, God has so arranged it that the power of the two hosts is equal, which means that the loyalists cannot possibly do what he has ordered them to do and promised they will be able to do. In fact, the entire battle has been staged only to provide God's anointed Son with a dramatic entrance. When he appears on the third day to claim all the honors, his first act is to say to the loyalists, "Thanks for the effort, boys, but this is a job for Superman." They in turn respond not with disappointment or with a sense of injured merit, but (the verse tells us) with "joy"; not joy at being humiliated—*they don't see it that way*—but joy at having been joined and praised by one to whom they have sworn allegiance. What they could have easily seen as a reason to change masters, they contrive (that is, work) to see as a reason for continuing their fealty. They too can style this the strife of glory, but they have managed to find their glory (and the maintenance of their faith) in a willingness to resign it to another.

Note that both sides are exercising their reason and judgment; no one is "submitting uncritically." The world continually throws up puzzles to be solved and everyone tries to solve them; it is just that, given the radically divergent presuppositions of the two parties, each engages in the task of reasoning by asking different questions: on the one hand, "since we are in the fight of our lives and the adversary seems to have a superior technology, what can we do to neutralize it?" (the rebels proceed to invent gunpowder); on the other, "since God is God and intends only good for us, how can we see this turn of events as further evidence of his goodness?"

In choosing *that* question to ask, the loyalists follow (or, rather, anticipate) Augustine's counsel to those who meet with phenomena apparently subversive of the true faith, either in the Scriptures or in life: subject the phenomena "to diligent scrutiny until an interpretation contributing to the reign of

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charity is produced" (*On Christian Doctrine*). That is, since you know that in a world ordered by a just and benevolent God everything signifies his love for us and our obligation to love our fellow creatures for his sake, struggle with what the world presents to you until you are able to discern that signification. Knowing what the answer is in advance does not mean that there is no work to be done, nothing to reason about; for the answer is a general one whose application in particular circumstances is always an arduous task. "To the pure and healthy internal eye," declares Augustine, "He is everywhere." But since our eyes are as yet far from pure, seeing him everywhere is not a foregone conclusion but a continual challenge.

To this analysis of the interdependence of faith (whether satanic or godly) and reason, Father Neuhaus poses objections that might be put in the form of two questions:

1. Cannot reason be exercised *before* the first premise is in place?
2. In the course of reasoning cannot that first premise itself become the object of critical attention?

I would answer the first question by turning to the tract of Augustine's that Neuhaus cites against me. In *The Usefulness of Believing*, Augustine addresses his friend Honoratus in an effort to turn him away from the Manichean position on the relationship between faith and reason. The Manicheans, as Augustine reports them, dismiss as "superstition" the notion that the Christian must be "by believing forearmed" before he can begin to reason; they urge instead that "no one . . . have faith without having first discussed and made clear the truth." Augustine acknowledges the appeal (which he once felt) of this way of thinking, especially to young men intoxicated by the prospect of throwing off the shackles "of old wives fables" in order to "drink in . . . the open and pure Truth." But he identifies the man who detaches himself from all authority with the fool who has nothing of wisdom inside him, but nevertheless sets out to determine, by reason alone, who is and is not a wise man. Since he does not begin with an inner understanding of that which he seeks he will be unable to recognize it. "For by no signs whatever can one recognize anything, unless he shall have known that thing," known it, that is, *in advance*. Someone who inquires after something (truth, wisdom, the good) without having internalized its identifying criteria is asking of signs that they tell him, all by themselves, what they are signs of; and since no sign can satisfy that demand—no sign can deliver up the norm by which to judge its own adequacy or significance—all signs, at least for this unanchored inquirer, will either signify nothing in particular or (it is the same thing) signify anything at all.

A nice example is provided by the Satan of Milton's *Paradise Regained*, who at the beginning of the poem assigns himself the task of figuring out just who this person is who has been singled out by John the Baptist at the river Jordan and on whose head "a perfect dove" has descended. We know that Satan is in trouble when he immediately says of the dove "whate'er it meant." If he doesn't know what it means when he sees it, the gap between him and knowledge will not be filled in by additional information, for that information will itself become drawn into the vortex of his uncertainty. For four books and thousands of lines Satan stalks the Son, subjecting him, as he says, to ever "narrower scrutiny," and hazarding his "best conjectures" as to the nature of his adversary, but still finds himself, after all his surveillance and sifting of evidence, "yet in doubt."

In the final scene he is still devising ways to "know . . . more" and announces, "Another *method* I must now begin." This is the authentic voice of technological modernism, which holds out the hope that the world will deliver its truth when the right techniques—instruments of disinterested observation—are applied to it; but no matter how close the phenomena are brought to the doubting eye by sophisticated instruments of observation, that eye will see only its own doubt at once miniaturized and magnified. As Augustine puts it, "The fool is void of wisdom, therefore he knows not wisdom, for he could not see it with his eyes." And moreover, if he *could* see it, he would no longer be a fool because there would now be something in him answerable to that which he seeks to know: "He cannot see it and not have it, nor have it and be a fool." Were Satan to succeed in coming to know who the Son truly is he would no longer be Satan because it is his distance from that knowledge that defines him and makes him both what he is and what he isn't, and what he is, at least until some moment of total conversion, is someone who says of the dove, "whate'er it meant" and will say the same of anything—the Son, baptism, the Trinity, resurrection, God—whose significance exceeds what is apparent on the empirical surface.

Satan is the very type of those who would reason before they believe. Such a one, Augustine insists, has things exactly backward; if you begin to reason before the mind has been cleared of error, your reasoning will be forever errant: "To wish to see the truth in order to purge your soul, when as it is purged for the very purpose that you may see, is surely perverse and preposterous." Purge the soul first by orienting it to the appropriate object of desire, and *then* reason, for only then, says Augustine, are you "capable of receiving reason," capable, that is, of engaging in reasoning that is not endlessly spinning its own wheels.

Spinning your wheels is what you would be doing if you were to bracket your first premise and make it

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the object of critical attention. To be sure, this is something you might do, at least as an experiment, but where would you be if you did it? You would be nowhere—at sea amidst innumerable interpretative possibilities—and you could only proceed by installing some other premise in the position of first (usually while pretending not to do so). This is what the Manicheans do when they urge the "premature" believer to set aside his conviction that what Christ "hath said is true, although it be supported by no reason" and begin instead to reason toward Christ's truth under their guidance. But, objects Augustine, that is to ask the believer to exchange the authority of his church and its traditions for the authority, no less unsupported, of these self-appointed reasoners. For a Christian to "distrust and overthrow" what has been "handed down from our blessed forefathers" in favor of another kind of knowledge is "to seek a sacrilegious way unto true religion," sacrilegious because it subordinates religious truth to a formalism that should serve, not judge, it. As Bruce Marshall has put it, "The narratives which identify Jesus are epistemic trump; if it comes to conflict . . . between these beliefs and any others, the narratives win" ("What Is Truth?" *Pro Ecclesia*, Fall 1995).

Does this mean, as Neuhaus asks, that the central beliefs of Christianity cannot be falsified? No, it means that the central beliefs of Christianity cannot be falsified (or even strongly challenged) by evidence that would not be seen *as* evidence by those who hold the beliefs. If you tell a believer that no one can walk on water or rise from the dead or feed five thousand with two fishes and five loaves, he will tell you (in the mode of Tertullian) that the impossibility of those actions for mere men is what makes their performance so powerful a sign of divinity. For one party the reasoning is, "No man can do it and therefore he didn't do it"; for the other the reasoning is, "Since no man could do it, he who did it is more than man." For one party falsification follows from the absence of any rational account of how the purported phenomena could have occurred; for the other the absence of a rational explanation is just the point, one that, far from challenging the faith, confirms it.

When Neuhaus declares that essential Christian truth claims would be in very deep trouble "were a corpse to be identified beyond reasonable doubt as that of Jesus of Nazareth," it depends on what he means by "reasonable doubt." If he means the kind of doubt an empirically minded nonbeliever might have, then the doubt is a foregone conclusion since it is implicit in the way he (already) thinks. "A virgin birth? A God incarnate? A dead God who rises again? Come on! Give me a break!"

But if Neuhaus means a reasonable doubt a Christian might have then it would have to be a doubt raised by tensions *internal* to Christian belief, and not by tensions *between* Christian belief and some other belief system. An atheist might see the Holocaust as further confirmation of the doubt that is an article of his (non) faith ("See, I told you there is no God"); a believer might see the Holocaust as something difficult to reconcile with his conviction of a God who is merciful and he might find himself in a state of doubt. He might then be able to overcome the doubt by finding a way to understand the event that did not deny God's mercy; and then again he might not, in which case he would be in the middle of a crisis of faith. But whatever he did with the doubt, it will have been a doubt *for him* by virtue of what he believed and not because a challenge to his belief has come from someplace outside it. The discovery by an archeological expedition of a body in the vicinity of where Jesus' tomb is thought to have been will not raise a doubt (or even be the first step on the road to doubt) for the Christian who reads in Matthew 28:11-15 that from day one nonbelievers have sought to substitute a naturalistic explanation for the mystery of the resurrection. It will take more than a body, or carbon dating, or "identifying marks" to shake a faith which is not *built* on that kind of evidence in the first place. What it would take I don't know and, at any rate, the answer would vary with the strength and firmness of individual believers; but no believer will find his faith shaken by evidence that *is* evidence only in the light of assumptions he does not share and considers flatly wrong.

It seems unnecessary to say so, but when you think a view wrong, you don't see what is seen by those who think it right—those who live and move and have their being within it. When Satan says of the war in Heaven, "*we* style it the strife of glory," he is responding to the archangel Michael who has just characterized the war as "evil." It is only in a trivial sense that the two agents, operating within opposing first premises, are talking about the same thing. No feature of the battle is seen in common, and indeed, as I noted earlier, Michael would, if pressed, balk at the word "battle" itself, since it implies an encounter with a doubtful outcome whereas he harbors no doubts at all. Nor would it do any good to delay the action in order to allow time for the combatants to review and discuss each other's vocabulary (the dream of liberalism), for even if they use the same words, the words are not really the same in that each hears them as referring to different things or nonthings. Michael cannot understand the word "glory" as applied to an action (rebellion) that separates creatures from their God, since, for him, glory can only be found in obedience to, and union with, the Highest. And the word "evil" can hardly be heard intelligibly by someone who has earlier declared, "Evil be thou my good," and by so declaring renounced the perspective of morality altogether.

When Neuhaus insists that "we encounter propositions all the time that we can quite well understand but happen to believe are not true," he slides away

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from one sense of understanding—grasping the syntax and semantics of an utterance—to another—experiencing the truth of that utterance in your heart and soul. It is in the first sense that Milton's fallen angels remain able to frame and receive sentences containing words like "Heaven," "faith," and "good," but their "understanding" of those words is only skin deep (that's why they're devils) and so by "good" they understand "advantage to themselves," and by "faith" they understand "firmness of apostasy," and by "Heaven" they understand "the territory temporarily occupied by the enemy." When Mammon surveys the topography of Hell, he sees natural resources out of which the devils will be able to simulate light and raise tall structures, and he exclaims, "and what can Heav'n show more?" *He doesn't know, he doesn't understand.*

And on the other side when Abdiel hears Satan urge rebellion in the name of freedom from God's tyranny he responds by declaring the devil's propositions (God is a tyrant; freedom can only be found apart from him) not only "blasphemous," but "false." Nor are they false in a way that could be corrected by better information. What would have to be "corrected," or rather entirely replaced, is the false first premise in the light of which they are perspicuous. They are not at all perspicuous to Abdiel, who is in effect saying to Satan: how could you believe something that is so obviously not true? In this sense, to say of an assertion that it is "not true" is to say that you don't understand it, that from your perspective while it has all the marks of a meaningful utterance—a syntax and a semantics—it is a formal husk with no content, just sound and fury signifying nothing. And that is how you understand it, as nothing, and therefore you don't, except in a very superficial sense, understand it at all. (I would make the same analysis of Neuhaus' declaration that "a Christian can understand what a liberal atheist is saying"; sure he can, he will understand the atheist as saying error, that which is not.)

Of course, understanding in a superficial sense is what makes most of the world's business possible, and that is why, as Neuhaus correctly observes, "That two plus two equals four is true can be agreed on by Christian and non-Christian alike." The question is, what does the agreement say about the level of understanding they share, and I would answer, "not much." Adhering to the convention that two plus two equals four is like adhering to the convention that we drive on the right side of the road or to the convention that red means stop and green means go. You do it not because you are invested in its truth but because it is only if everyone adheres to the same conventions that automobiles won't crash and contracts will be enforceable. The truths of arithmetic are (for most of us) indisputable because it is in no one's interest to dispute them and in everyone's interest to agree about them. All of us—Christians, non-Christians, liberals, Marxists, anarchists, republicans, democrats, preachers, pornographers—use them and use them in situations in which it is understood that what is at stake is the maintenance of civil order and that other things that might be at stake—the nature of truth, the health of our souls, the salvation of the human race—have been, for the time, bracketed.

"Liberalism" is the name of the political theory whose aim it is to bracket off as much of life as possible from these thorny questions, to fashion a public sphere held together by agreements like two plus two equals four and red means stop. In reaction to the apparent failure of mankind to identify the one truly meaningful thing around which life might be organized, liberalism sets out to identify the set of truly *non*meaningful things—things that no one will want to die for or kill for—around which life might be organized. The history of liberalism (which begins with debates about what is or is not a "thing indifferent" and about who is to have authority over things indifferent once the items in the category have been specified) is the unhappy discovery that for everything identified as truly nonmeaningful there will be someone for whom it means everything and who will therefore want to dispute or alter or eliminate the convention.

As yet two plus two equals four has not become such a flash point of disagreement, but it could (no one used to dispute the convention of using "he" to indicate an impersonal, non-gendered agent); for, as Hobbes pointed out, well in advance of the development of alternative geometries, the "doctrine of lines and figures" is not so "perpetually disputed" as the "doctrine of Right and Wrong" only "because men care not in that subject what be truth, as a thing that crosses man's ambition."

Until two plus two equals four crosses someone's ambition it is a fact agreed on by all parties, but this doesn't mean that there are truths *above* ideology, but that there are (at least by current convention) truths *below* ideology. So long as they remain below ideology (so long as they continue to be "things indifferent" and gore no one's ox) they can safely circulate in the public sphere without any fear that their use will upset its orderly workings. Obviously, "Christ is risen" is not now such a truth (although there is an argument for saying that it once was and was therefore no more controversial than two plus two equals four), and because it is not, liberalism cannot allow it to have a public life in the sense that it might be put forward as a *reason* for taking this action (going to war, passing a budget, ending affirmative action) rather than another. The very stability of the liberal state depends on (1) maintaining a large set of truths below ideology and warding off efforts to "politicize" them (hence the resistance to political accounts of literary "masterpieces" presumed to be the repository of beliefs belonging to no one and everyone) and (2)

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removing from the day-to-day business of life truths already ideologically charged lest they tear apart the common fabric of society.

Of course what is and is not ideological is itself a determination of ideology, of that agenda or vision in the happy position of getting to draw the lines. What this means is that any arrangement of the categories will be to the disadvantage of some ideologies (whose central truths will be accorded the status of common sense) and to the disadvantage of others (whose central truths will have been labelled "not safe for deployment in public life"). In late-twentieth-century America the preferred truths and values of liberalism (autonomy, individual freedom, rational deliberation, civility) are in the first category—they "go without saying" and no agenda is legitimate unless it defers to them—and the preferred truths and values of Christianity (obedience, respect for authority and tradition, faith, the community of worship) are in the second—it is fine to adhere to them so long as you leave them at home when you enter the marketplace or the voting booth.

It is my contention that Michael McConnell, Stephen Carter, and George Marsden accept this state of affairs even as they complain about it because they accept the private/public split (McConnell), or the separation of a message from its source in religious conviction (Carter), or a distinction between reasonable and dogmatic religious views (Marsden). Neuhaus replies by suggesting that these men might be making *tactical* arguments, arguments designed to gain entry to the marketplace, for it is only by entering it that they might be able to transform it. I am simply reading too closely (with a "gimlet eye") discursive gestures that are "preliminary moves appropriate to what some Christians call 'pre-evangelization.'"

This is a good point, and one that finds support in recent events. In *Rosenberger v. Rector*, decided just last June, the Supreme Court ruled that the University of Virginia could not deny funds to an avowedly evangelistic newspaper. The University had based its policy on a distinction between university-related activities and any activity that "primarily promotes a particular belief in or about deity or an ultimate reality." But the Court rejected this "establishment clause" logic and reasoned that the key issue is "viewpoint discrimination," and that a regulation supposedly neutral (because it does not disfavor any particular religion) is nevertheless biased against the "theistic perspective." That this is precisely Michael McConnell's argument is hardly surprising since it was he who argued the case before the Court on behalf of the Christian students.

Meanwhile, sometime before the *Rosenberger* ruling, Stephen Carter's book was picked up by President Clinton, who publicly praised it and appears to have factored it into his thinking about moral issues in general and church-state issues in particular. George Marsden's book is too recently published to have had any appreciable effects, but it is reasonable to expect that its large sweep and authoritative scholarship will command a wide audience not confined to Christian believers.

In different, but related, ways, then, the work of these three men (and of course not only of these three) is already enacting the strategy urged by Neuhaus: "You engage people at the point where they are engageable and then hope that they can be moved, step by step, toward the fullness of truth." I am not sure that is what these authors had in mind; they present their arguments as if they were not tactical but philsophical; in short they claim for them *coherence* and I stand by my critique of that claim even as I acknowledge that these arguments, coherent or not, seem to be doing actual political work. (In general the incoherence of an argument is no bar to, and may even enhance, its political effectiveness.)

This brings me to a final point, which looks back to many of the issues raised in this exchange. Neuhaus notes that by the logic of my argument "a non-Christian could not understand the poetry of the very Christian John Milton," a conclusion, he says, that flies in the face of the fact that "non-Christians such as Stanley Fish are recognized as authorities on Milton." This would appear to be a "pincer" move that would force me to choose between my (imputed) status as an authority and the thesis of my paper. I shall avoid (or evade) the choice, however, by asking what kind of understanding qualifies one to be an authority on Milton? The answer is an understanding of the issues at stake in the community of Milton criticism, and while those issues will certainly touch on questions of belief, what the critic himself believes will not be one of those questions.

When I entered the conversation in the early 1960s, among the questions were: Is Milton an Arian, that is, an anti-Trinitarian? Was he a mortalist, that is, did he believe the soul died with the body? Was he a compatabilist, that is, did he believe both in free will and determinism? Like other Miltonists I pursued these questions by poring over Milton's prose works, reading Augustine, Tertullian, and other church fathers known to have influenced him, reading contemporary sermons and theological tracts. I was not doing this work in order to decide what I myself believed about the Trinity or the resurrection of the soul or free will, but in order to decide what I believed about what Milton believed about the Trinity or the resurrection of the soul or free will. And when I did decide about what Milton believed the decision led me not to live my life differently than I had before but to interpret Milton differently than I had before. I might give different answers to questions like, Is the Son a free agent in Book III when he offers to die in place of Adam and Eve, and, Does

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Milton endorse the idea of the "fortunate fall"? In giving these answers, however, I would be saying nothing about my own relation to these doctrines and it would be perfectly possible for me to talk knowledgeably about them without having any relation to them at all because the knowledge I would be claiming is knowledge of what *Milton* thought, and not knowledge of a more intimate kind.

Indeed, an intimate (personal) knowledge of Milton's beliefs is not only not required, it is beside the point. Being an authority on Milton means being able to answer a certain kind of question while knowing that another kind of question is not even to be asked. "Was Milton really inspired by God?" is such a question; it is not debatable within the conventions of Milton criticism unlike the question, "What role does Milton's *claim* of inspiration play in his poetry and prose?" which is debated all the time under the professional rubric of "Milton's muse." If I am an authority on Milton I am a *professional* authority, a category that requires me not to share Milton's beliefs but to be able to describe them. (The same holds for the critic-historian who compares different worldviews; he *inhabits* none of them.)

The distinction was brought home to me just the other day when I heard a discussion of Walt Whitman on National Public Radio. The discussion leader was a professor of American literature and he was saying the usual things professors say. However, some of those who called in to the show were true believers; they had been carrying copies of *Leaves of Grass* in their pockets since junior high school and they pulled them out whenever life presented a problem or forced a choice. Those callers "understood" Whitman in the sense of identifying with him, and unless they learn how to distance themselves from that identification, they are unlikely to say anything of interest to a Whitman specialist. A Whitman specialist pulls out his copy of *Leaves of Grass* in order to make a point, not in order to find a truth to live by. (I am aware that this distinction reinvents the public/private split and that the attendant exclusion of personal views from the public practice of criticism has been forcefully challenged by many under the rubric—and banner—of "personal writing.")

To be sure, these categories are not as airtight as the previous paragraph may have suggested. A true believer could also be a specialist and the fact of his belief might give him a special purchase on Whitman's or Milton's thought. But then again a true believer might be blind to certain aspects of that thought because he was too deep inside it to see its "limitations," and seeing limitations is one of the things a professional is supposed to do lest he be accused of worshiping what he should be studying. And if there were a true believer who also engaged in the professional practice of seeing limitations he might find his belief diminished by that practice; his faith might be shaken. But on the other side a nonbeliever who spent a lifetime studying Milton's beliefs might wake up one day to find that he had become so committed to them that he felt constrained to live them out in his daily life; he will have found a faith while looking for something else.

My own thoughts about these permutations (and there are more than I have instanced) tend to coalesce around a moment in a Milton seminar I taught several years ago. The students were discoursing glibly (as my example had instructed them) about some matter or other—the intricacies of Milton's verse, or the import of his allusions to Virgil—and I without thinking burst out, "No, no, he doesn't want your admiration; he wants your soul!" Was this a professional comment? Had I crossed a line? Had something happened to me of which I was only dimly aware? Was I in danger (or in hope) of no longer being an authority and becoming something else? God only knows. FT

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Facing Up to Infanticide

J. Bottum

Every philosopher knows, at last, that not all ethical systems are equally good. We demand that a general ethics conform, as philosophers put it, to both truth and logic—which is to say, we demand that it not contradict the facts we hold about the universe and that it not contradict itself. And to these difficult demands not all ethical systems respond equally well. Relativist claims such as *It's wrong to say anything is wrong* are simply incoherent; no grand talk of "embracing contradiction" or "containing multitudes" (à la Walt Whitman) is going to make a workable ethics out of them. The number of possible ethical systems is actually quite small.

For over twenty years in America, the legality of abortion has primarily been defended with an ethical system that most Americans now recognize as philosophically incoherent—a system based on taking the constitutionally acknowledged right to possess private property and translating it into rights of personal privacy and possession of the body. The system may originally have been forced upon abortion supporters by the Supreme Court's use of it in *Roe v. Wade*, but it has proved false in both the ways ethical systems prove false: as being both externally and internally inconsistent, as both contradicting what we know about human reproduction and contradicting itself.

And for these same twenty years, defenders of unborn children have battled abortion primarily by pointing out the inconsistencies of the ethical system on which abortion defenders rely: the notion of the body as a possession is meaningless; the fact that a fetus is a human life is medically demonstrable; the language of rights, extended to the taking of life, simply contradicts itself.

As the American public's faith in the "rights talk" of radical, Me-Generation individualism decreases, the pro-life movement has steadily advanced. Many Americans may still inhabit "the mushy middle," as it was recently called by Norma McCorvey (the "Jane Roe" of *Roe v. Wade*, who defected last year to a pro-life position). But that middle has substantially shifted toward the limiting of abortions, and some abortion proponents have begun to change their ground, seeking a new ethical system with which to defend unlimited abortion.

What's frightening, and what the pro-life movement must face, is that they may find what they're looking for. Though it is true that there are not many possible ethical systems, the history of philosophy reveals that there is more than one. And in the stern philosophies of the ancient world—a world that accepted slavery, infanticide, and gradations of human life—the pro-abortion movement may find the coherent general ethics it currently lacks.

Since the 1970s, abortion rhetoric has been dominated by euphemisms whose dishonesty and disingenuousness increase with each new medical technique for saving prematurely born children. By displaying sonograms, heart-beat monitors, and even the corpses of aborted children, pro-life activists have been able to employ the simple strategy of exposing the truth beneath "pro-choice" euphemisms. And though this relentless exposure is called pornography by pro-abortion activists and strikes many in "the mushy middle" as distasteful, it has had its intended effect of revealing the willfulness of such terms as "potential life," "product of conception," and even "fetus"—and it leaves abortion rhetoric sounding increasingly heartless in response to America's million and a half abortions a year. After she was reported as saying "abortion is a bad thing," Kate Michelman, the director of the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League, denied it utterly: "I would never, never, never, never, never mean to say such a thing." In a high-water mark of moral and political inattention, the Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders declared, "We really need to get over

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this love affair with the fetus." The refusal to admit any moral gravity to the act of abortion—a logical consequence of abortion taken as a right of privacy—has put pro-abortion activists outside the actual discussion of abortion in America.

Some liberal writers and analysts have begun at last to recognize this. The historian George McKenna claimed last fall in the *Atlantic Monthly* that a truly liberal position would agree that abortion is guaranteed by the Constitution, but nonetheless see it as a wrong that ought gradually to be eliminated—much as Lincoln before the Civil War acknowledged the constitutionality of slavery but sought through education, legal limitation, and moral suasion its eventual elimination. In an essay last October in the *New Republic*, the well-known feminist Naomi Wolf asserted that abortion activists, by sticking to the old rhetorical lines, condemn their followers to "three destructive consequences—two ethical, one strategic: hardness of heart, lying, and political failure." Only a month earlier, Peter Singer (the radical British activist for animal rights) suggested in the London *Spectator* that we acknowledge "the fetus is a living human being."

Such suggestions are not entirely new. In the late sixties and early seventies, several future neoconservatives argued that true liberalism requires the rejection of abortion: "The pro-abortion flag," wrote the then-liberal Richard John Neuhaus in 1967, "is planted on the wrong side of the liberal/conservative divide."

There were few on the left willing to listen to such an argument in 1967, and there are fewer now, when support for abortion has became *the* test for liberal credentials. Governor Robert Casey of Pennsylvania found himself barred from the dais of the 1992 Democratic Convention simply because of his pro-life position. The recently organized "Feminists for Life" was founded by a group of otherwise orthodox feminists who argued that true feminism ought to reject abortion and found themselves summarily ejected from the National Organization of Women. The various 1960s projects for radical liberation were perhaps correct, in terms of immediate results, to place sexual liberation at the center of their rhetoric: nothing was more likely to lure young converts or more pleasurably to satisfy the adolescent impulse to rebellion. But since the sixties, during the years in which radicalism hijacked liberalism, the task of maintaining the centrality of sexual freedom has condemned liberals to the uncompromising defense of unlimited abortion—in order to eradicate the costs of what used to be called "free love."

And if the tatters of the left have inescapably tied themselves to the abortion license, general American culture may have as well. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, though denounced by pro-life activists for her part in the 1992 *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* decision, was at least right when she observed that in the years since *Roe v. Wade* an entire generation has grown up expecting to be able to rely upon abortion to terminate not merely pregnancies resulting from rape or incest and pregnancies that threaten the life of the mother, but also pregnancies resulting from inattention or contraceptive failure and pregnancies that threaten a deformed child, an unwanted child, or even a child of the wrong gender. Any medical procedure performed a million and a half times a year—at a rate far outstripping any other developed nation—argues a cultural investment of enormous proportions.

Perhaps even the Republican plans for social renewal rely in some way upon the continuing reality of abortion. A conservative writer, Jerry Z. Muller, recently announced his defection from mainstream conservatism by publishing "The Conservative Case for Abortion" as a cover story last summer in the *New Republic*. His utilitarian argument that "the right-to-life position undermines [the] fundamentally conservative effort to strengthen families" is unlikely to persuade many on the right. It may be true, as Muller writes, that "conservatives have long assumed that government should promote those social norms that encourage the creation of decent men and women," but conservatives have long assumed as well that decent men and women don't slaughter their young.

Muller's "Conservative Case for Abortion" harkens back, in a perverse way, to the old liberals' claim that the abortion flag properly belongs with the heartless Republicans. And yet, his point that "unsocialized children are at the heart of our social deterioration" deserves some notice. The disrespect for life engendered by an abortion culture probably deserves larger notice. But abortion (particularly when subsidized for the poor and unmarried) is in fact likely to decrease somewhat the risk to society, and the kind of quick social reform that the American public seems to demand from the Republican Congress may rely in part on plenty of abortions to decrease the number of unwed mothers and unsocialized children. Some rifts have already begun to appear between the economic and law-and-order conservatives, on the one hand, and the pro-life conservatives, on the other; not as many rifts or as important as the liberal press delights to claim, but real rifts nonetheless.

The current entanglement with abortion—by political liberals, the general culture, and perhaps even by political conservatives—is finally what distinguishes the recent essays by George McKenna, Naomi Wolf, and Peter Singer from attempts in the late sixties and early seventies to speak honestly about abortion. Unlimited abortion is now the reality, and honesty about abortion's murderousness no longer necessarily means its rejection. Some supporters of abortion, having rejected the old, incoherent ethical system of privacy rights, are now willing to acknowl-

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edge that abortion kills babies. But they are willing to claim the necessity for allowing abortion anyway.

The traditional pro-life strategy of exposing pro-abortion euphemism relies on the tacit assumption that under any Jewish, Christian, or even post-Christian ethical system, the knowledge that it kills a living baby would suffice to end the practice of abortion. That assumption may no longer be true. Certainly McKenna's use of Lincoln's pre-Civil War position on slavery suggests the assumption is no longer obvious, for Lincoln harbored some hopes of rescuing the generation then enslaved—and the living slave has some small chance of manumission, while the aborted baby has no more chances. Wolf tells the story of arguing, while she was pregnant, against an opponent of abortion and snapping at last in frustration, "Of course it's a baby. . . . And if I found myself in circumstances in which I had to make the terrible decision to end this life, then that would be between myself and God." Her opponent, as she tells the story, was silenced because she had at last said something that made sense to him. But the truth is more likely that she had at last said what penetrates to so fundamental a clash between ethical systems that any sort of argument becomes impossible.

In the nineteenth century, Friedrich Nietzsche denounced the Victorians and "little moralistic females à la [George] Eliot" as "English flatheads" for thinking that they could preserve Christian morality without God. Nietzsche was no proponent of a Christian ethics, but he saw clearly that such ethics relies on the publicly held proposition of God's existence. Neither Jews nor Christians have always lived up to their ethical systems, but the notion of reverence for individual lives is born (in the West at least) solely from a Judeo-Christian impulse. In his *Spectator* article entitled "Killing Babies Isn't Always Wrong," Peter Singer writes, "Pope John Paul II proclaims that the widespread acceptance of abortion is a mortal threat to the traditional moral order. . . . I sometimes think that he and I at least share the virtue of seeing clearly what is at stake in the debate."

If we are so entangled with the practice that legal and probably common abortion is now inescapable, and if we acknowledge that abortion kills, then we live in the tragic, redemptionless sort of world imagined by the Ancients from the Greek tragedians to the Roman Stoics—a world which had at various times, we must admit, an ethical system consistent both externally and internally, consistent with the commonly accepted facts of the universe and with itself. In moves that ought to have been predictable, Wolf and Singer both begin to seek a way to accept infanticide by recreating, consciously or unconsciously, the stern philosophies of the ancient, pre-Christian world.

Wolf argues that pro-abortion rhetoric, by denying life to the unborn child and gravity to the act of killing it, has deprived women of a "moral framework" with which to understand abortion—and thus has driven middle America to embrace the pro-life movement that has monopolized all moral discourse. Feminists need to admit, she asserts, many of the perfectly true points they are foolishly committed to disputing: that the fetus is a child, that the current abortion rate is a terrible social evil, that "pregnancy confounds Western philosophy's idea of the autonomous self, [for] the pregnant woman is in fact both a person in her body and a vessel." The blind adherence to privacy rights and "the refusal to use a darker and sterner and more honest moral rhetoric" have robbed women of a "sense of sin," and consequently of the possibility of grief, atonement, and healing.

Some philosophical and theological naiveté seems inevitable even in otherwise well-educated writers nowadays—Wolf herself bemoans contemporary "religious illiteracy"—and it is perhaps unfair to complain about skewed uses of terms like "soul," "sin," "guilt," and "atonement" in what is admittedly a popular essay. And yet, all the elements are present in Wolf's analysis for a full-blown philosophical Stoicism and a Stoic acceptance of infanticide: not just the ethical elements of self-possession, resignation to a tragic world, and stern moral rhetoric, but all the metaphysical elements as well. When Wolf writes first of "what can only be called our souls," but then later in her essay calls it "'God' or 'soul'—or if you are secular and prefer it, 'conscience,'" she is not simply confounding philosophical terms, but aiming in an untrained way at the metaphysical equations that stand behind the Stoic worldview.

Peter Singer similarly aims toward Stoicism. In the latter part of his essay, with his sketch of the history of infanticide, he indulges the jejune sort of cultural relativism which argues that if any culture anywhere once performed a practice, then the practice must be morally permissible. But he is a philosopher by training (and the author of the article on ethics in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*), and for the most part he sees clearly what sort of ethical system is necessary to defend abortion coherently. It is an ethical system admitting gradations in the worthiness and usefulness of life, and he argues that we have already adopted such an ethics in fact if not yet in rhetoric.

The recognition that there are "living human beings whose lives may intentionally be terminated" means abortion activists can "at last properly engage with the arguments of those opposed to abortion," he observes. The real question proponents of abortion should ask is this: "Why—in the absence of religious beliefs about being made in the image of God, or having an immortal soul—should mere membership of the species *Homo sapiens* be crucial to whether the life of a being may or may not be taken?"

The sleight-of-hand in such a question is one that Americans have encountered so often it almost doesn't bear mentioning: by fiat, religious belief—

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alone among beliefs—is prohibited from public discourse; by fiat, religious believers—alone among believers—are prohibited from employing in rational discourse the facts they hold about the universe. In Singer's question, however, is also something Americans haven't often encountered, for he sees clearly (as Nietzsche did before him) that the Judeo-Christian prohibition against baby-killing is a tattered, incoherent, and indefensible ethical remnant when divorced from Judeo-Christian religious belief. We must stoically resign ourselves, Singer argues, to an unredeemed and overpopulated world in which we have to kill useless and unwanted human beings.

The strategy of refusing euphemism has, in one sense, won the day. The facts about abortion are now acknowledged even by solidly liberal and feminist writers, and the incoherence and social disaster of a general ethics based on the right of privacy are now taken for granted by thoughtful analysts. The pro-life movement must not imagine, however, that it has thereby won the abortion debate. There exist philosophically coherent ethical systems that grant no sanctity to all grades of human life, ethical systems to which ancient history repeatedly testifies.

Worse, beyond external and internal coherence, there are no rational, philosophical grounds—no "meta-ethics," as philosophers call it—for judging between ethical systems. The proponents of abortion seeking a new, coherent general ethics seem to imagine that admitting the facts will allow a real discussion to begin between the pro-abortion and pro-life movements. Without such honesty, Singer concludes his essay, "people on both sides of the debate will continue to argue past each other." But the truth is rather that an agreement that we share no fundamental ethical positions—that we are utterly divided, that belief in a root American ethics is a sentimental delusion—would mean the end of discourse.

It may even mean the end of the culture. Philosophical discourse is not the only way, or even the primary way, in which people are persuaded to change their ethical systems. There is social pressure and (many Americans still believe) conversion by the grace of God. And there is war. The pro-life movement is undoubtedly still correct that most Americans consider infanticide something worse than a stern necessity: no sane politician is on the verge of saying publicly, "Yes, they are babies, and we have to kill them anyway." But the longer we live with abortion, the closer the day comes when all the supporters of abortion emerge from their fog of euphemism and incoherence to announce a fundamental rupture between ethical systems in America. The urgency to ban abortion is, of course, an urgency to save the four thousand babies it kills every day. But it is also an urgency to preserve—without civil war—an ethics that holds infanticide to be wrong. FT

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Law of Moses, Law of Nature

David Novak

I

Modernity has been largely shaped for Jews by three momentous experiences: the acquisition of citizenship by individual Jews in secular nation-states, the destruction of one-third of Jewry in the Holocaust, and the founding of the State of Israel. All three of these experiences are essentially political rather than religious. And they thus compel Jewish thinkers to face the question of natural law, for natural law—understood at least initially as the universally valid and rationally discernible norms of human conduct—is inextricably bound up with all political thought.

The acquisition of citizenship by Jews in modern nation-states was an enormous change from earlier political situations. During the Middle Ages, Jews were members of a semi-independent polity within a larger polity. The political status of the Jewish communities was determined by some sort of contract with the larger host societies by which they were allowed to live, as it were, as *imperium in imperio*. Since these larger host societies, whether Christian or Muslim, were as religiously constituted as the Jewish community, their relations with the Jews were largely determined by religious criteria grounded in their respective revelations.

For the Christian or Muslim hosts the task was to find some religiously tolerated status for a community of nonbelievers living in their midst. For the Jewish guests, the task was to find some religiously tolerated status for a society of non-Jews under whose general rule Jews had to live. The task was made somewhat easier for both sides by the fact that Jews are not an ordinary group of nonbelievers in the eyes of Christianity and Islam, and Christians and Muslims are not ordinary gentiles in the eyes of Judaism.

The terms of the political relation between the Christian or Muslim hosts and the Jewish guests were largely theological and historical. The presence of Jews in larger, foreign societies had to be justified by the criteria of revelation, which enabled Christians or Muslims to regard Jews as a community somewhere in between the believers inside sacred space and the nonbelievers outside. Jews had to justify their presence in these societies to themselves by quite similar criteria.

All of this was viewed by both sides against an eschatological horizon in which present political relations were only tentative and would ultimately be subsumed in a world totally redeemed. And yet, where the general constitution of their relations was evaluated by both sides from the perspective of revelation, its specifics were negotiated very much within the historical situation at hand. Usually, these historical specifics were economic—the most ephemeral criteria of all. Jewish presence in these societies was usually justified at this level of *Realpolitik* by their economic usefulness to their hosts.

Natural law is both less exalted than direct divine revelation and more exalted than merely local human arrangements. Although, occasionally, the question of natural law did enter into medieval negotiations between Christian or Muslim hosts and Jewish guests, for the most part they were conducted either at the level of God's revealed law or human law. These societies could confine their self-definition to the historically immediate categories of Jew, Christian, or Muslim, and thus rely very little on the abstract category of "human person," with which natural law is concerned.

All of this changed, however, with the breakdown of the medieval world. With the new constitution of European society into nation-states, the issue of natural law arose in the form of natural rights. The view

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of society that came in the wake of the social contract theorists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was one that posited in one way or another the notion that human beings construct society from the beginning, with certain rights already in hand. Unlike the medieval view, in the modern view the individual human does not come *from* society but *to* it. The task of society is to facilitate the exercise of the natural rights of these human beings. In this view, all human beings begin from zero, so to speak, and everyone enters society (in theory anyway) at the same point in time and space.

This new notion of human personhood and human society provided the necessary theoretical conditions for the political emancipation of the Jews into European society and culture. But the concessions required from both sides were far more radical than the theological interpretations and economic adjustments required by medieval society. Here both sides had, in effect, to assume a primary and public identity as rational, ahistorical human beings, and reserve their secondary and private identity as Jews or Christians for more domestic spheres. (At this point in history, the Jewish-Muslim relationship becomes quite different from the Jewish-Christian one.) The early-nineteenth-century Jewish Enlightenment poet Judah Leib Gordon coined the slogan (in Hebrew) for Jews: "Be a Jew in your tent and a human being when you go out of it." The new relation between Jews and the larger world was negotiated by philosophical, not theological, means.

At least in theory, Jews were now offered their admission ticket to European society and culture; and, seemingly, it did not require that they abandon their Judaism by any detour through Christianity, as had been the case in the past. It is little wonder, then, that the vast majority of Jews regarded this as a very good offer whenever it was made to them, or promised to them, or even hinted at. And, although this process of admission took various forms and had various levels of success, at the theoretical level, at least, it required Jews to justify their political presence by the criteria of natural law, especially in its modern version as "natural rights." Indeed, much of Jewish thought—from Baruch Spinoza in the seventeenth century to Moses Mendelssohn in the eighteenth century to Hermann Cohen in the late nineteenth century—was a Jewish justification of natural rights and the liberal society. This explains the persistent loyalty of large numbers of Jews in Europe and America to quite stringent notions of secular social space as an absolute desideratum. And in justifying their own admission to a larger society, these Jewish thinkers had to constitute an opening for Judaism on the horizon of a new universal order—whether Judaism was to be deconstructed as Spinoza suggested, or tolerated as Mendelssohn asserted, or be the historical source of true universalism as Cohen speculated.

The second momentous experience that determined Jewish modernity is the Holocaust. Here the question of natural law enters the discussion by either its affirmation or its denial. For the great debate among Jews who ponder the Holocaust is whether it is to be interpreted along general or singular lines.

For those who argue that its significance is singular, the introduction of any universal element into the discussion only serves to dilute the Holocaust as a uniquely Jewish tragedy: to explain the Holocaust in universal terms, even universal moral terms, is ultimately to explain it away. If this view is carried to its logical conclusion, however, and any universal point of reference eliminated, the tragedy of the Jews can only be presented as the tragedy of a race of angels rather than a human people, and any connection with the victims has to be one of imaginary projection. (Of course, isn't it easy to turn a superhuman species, with which one shares nothing essential, into a subhuman species? Do not romanticization and demonization have much in common?) In other words, the explicit elimination of natural law makes any reasoned attempt to come to grips with the Holocaust harder.

The slogan "Never Again!" that emerged after the Holocaust implies that the Holocaust has a universal moral meaning, which, if properly learned, can provide at least a theoretical prophylactic against its repetition against *anyone*. I would argue that to present the Holocaust as a *human* tragedy no more dilutes its uniqueness than does the demand that the murderer of one's child be tried before a general tribunal. The deeper need for mourning and consolation does not eclipse the general need for the justice of retribution and prevention.

Despite a tendency of contemporary Jewish thought about the Holocaust to take a stand against natural law, another tendency upholds natural law (whether aware of its philosophic underpinnings or not). This line of thought is surely what is behind contemporary Jewish interest in the whole issue of human rights in the world, and which makes itself manifest in such attempts as the international drive against racism and terrorism to which many Jews have been so dedicated. In these attempts, Jews have had to present their own victimhood against a universal horizon: Jewish suffering as epitomized by the Holocaust has had to be presented as the most poignant example of the violation of human personhood and its essential rights. If such presentations are to rise from the level of special pleading to the level of truly rational reflection and argument, the perspective of natural law must make an essential entrance into the discussion.

The third momentous experience that determined Jewish modernity is the establishment of the State of Israel. Here the question of natural law has

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entered into the discussion by way of the debates about what sort of a polity the new Jewish state is to be. These debates began with the birth of modern Zionism at the end of the nineteenth century, and they have continued unabated since the reestablishment of Israel in 1948. And as has been the case with contemporary Jewish thought about the Holocaust, natural law has entered the discussion both by affirmation and by denial.

For those who have envisioned the State of Israel to be a democracy, which although primarily a Jewish polity for Jews is one in which non-Jews can become citizens and enjoy equal civil rights with the Jewish majority, the question of natural law is the question of human rights. Because Israel has from her inception allied herself with the West, she has had to justify her existence to the West (primarily the United States) as a constitutional democracy guaranteeing personal liberty and the protection of minorities.

There has also been, however, what might be called a revisionary type of Zionism, based on a philosophical denial of natural law in which the sole purpose of the State of Israel is to enhance the power of the Jewish people, with no concessions made to non-Jews or to the idea of common humanity rooted in common human nature. This type of Zionism argues for the cultural isolation of the Jewish people from the larger Western civilization in which they find themselves and with which they have had to cast their lot, like it or not. Where such isolation is less of a political possibility in our increasingly interconnected world, this form of Zionism admits *Realpolitik* common interests with the non-Jewish world only of the most specific and ephemeral kind.

Advocates of this position are not merely uninterested in pursuing philosophical discussions of commonality: they are often hostile to them, for such discussions would force them to admit a commonality deeper than that of momentary interests. Occasionally, at moments of great political stress, less sophisticated Jewish elements explictly, dramatically, and vehemently deny any common humanity between Jews and non-Jews. Because of their sensationalism, these outbursts frequently attract wide media attention, and the embarassed colleagues of those who have made them will usually utter some half-hearted denials. But the embarassment is typically more rhetorical than philosophical, for it almost always comes from those who recognize that such outbursts, whether philosophically justified or not, will make diplomacy in the larger world more difficult.

II

In reflections on the three determining experiences of Jewish modernity, the invocation of natural law largely presupposes the historical value of the Enlightenment. The political emancipation of the Jews from the confines of the ghetto is seen as philosophical liberation, the Holocaust as a denial of Enlightenment values of liberty and equality, and the State of Israel as the great historical opportunity for the Jewish people to build a Western-type democracy.

Nevertheless, Enlightenment thought has been attacked, especially since the Holocaust, as a betrayal of the Jewish people. The Holocaust and what is perceived as the continuing political isolation and vulnerability of the State of Israel are supposed to have taught us that Jews have been asked to give far more than they have gotten from Western civilization. And this has been used to argue, retroactively, that the Enlightenment itself (certainly as regards the Jews, and possibly in and of itself) has been a failure. Since almost all modern Jewish thinkers have assumed that the question of natural law is identical with the modern idea of natural rights, any assault on post-Enlightenment modernity would seem to entail the elimination of the question of natural law.

Even if one does not hold such a negative view of the Enlightenment, the question of natural law as it has been raised for modern Judaism is nonetheless a great problem. The universality essential to the idea of natural law seems to imply that Judaism must be justified by the criteria of something greater than itself. And even if the admission of a greater universe does not destroy continuity with the Jewish past, Judaism will seem to have played merely a secondary role in the larger scheme of things. How can a tradition like Judaism admit any such thing? Whatever role Jewish tradition has allowed universal human reason, it has been unwilling to allow any guest in its house to undermine the foundation of revelation. A traditional Jewish thinker already believes in a universal reality called "creation." Commitment to Jewish tradition compels the assertion that revelation grasps more of the truth of creation than human reason, with its natural law, could ever begin to know.

A Jewish thinker thus seems to have only two options when it comes to natural law. He can either affirm natural law and seemingly allow Judaism to be swallowed up by something greater and more universal than itself, or he can deny natural law and leave all issues of the relations of Jews and non-Jews on the level of pure power politics, where concern for truth is precluded. But in fact there is a third option, grounded in philosophy, available to Jewish thinkers.

The philosophical solution requires radical criticism of a key political idea of the Enlightenment: the theory of a social contract in which human beings construct their own primary society autonomously—a society that requires the permanent bracketing of all prior commitments, especially commitments to the revelations of a transcendent God. The idea runs from Locke to Kant to Rawls to Habermas, but it was presented to me by a well-known contemporary "autonomist"—the philosopher Richard Rorty. Now Rorty happens to be my colleague at the University of

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Virginia, and a little over a year ago he and I engaged in a public discussion there. (Because of its cordiality I hesitate to call it a "debate.") The discussion was essentially an exchange over Rorty's assertion that the invocation of God's will in a democratic conversation is unavoidably a "conversation stopper." As someone who believes in the authority of God's will as revealed to the Jewish people, and as someone who is convinced that there are no acceptable alternatives to democracy in the world today, I could not allow myself to leave such a challenge unanswered. The success of my answer depends on the answer to three more precise questions: Must democracy be one's primary community if it is to function well? How does God's will function for a Jewish believer? Is God's will the only basis for relationship with God?

III

A modern democracy might well be defined as a secular society that presupposes the natural rights of its members and bases its operations on the fulfillment of their prior rights. Democracy so defined cannot be based on revelation, inasmuch as revelation is a historical rather than a natural phenomenon. As historical, revelation is always to a singular, uniquely elected community. The identity of natural rights and history would require a universal human history, something that for Jews at least belongs to the humanly irretrievable antiquity of Adam or the humanly unattainable future of the Messiah. At any point in between these two unreachable temporal limits, nature is constituted generally and revelation singularly. The question, therefore, is whether those who base their morality on a revelation and its tradition can be members of a modern democracy apart from mere political and economic expediency.

Many have thought the answer to this question to be "no." Their answer, however, presupposes that democracy must be one's primary community in order for it to function well. Nevertheless, it can be argued that democracy actually functions better when it is, rather, one's secondary community. If that is the case, then those committed to a revelation and its tradition, like religious Jews, can indeed be members of a modern democracy in good faith.

Richard Rorty is right about the invocation of God's will being a "conversation stopper," that is, in a conversation within the confines of a democratic society and its constitution. For God's will has meaning only in a community explictly related to that God, where it stimulates the ongoing exegetical conversation essential to the community's transmission of revelation. For Jews, that revelation is a historically real covenant with God, a covenant whose law has the ultimate authority of being God's will. This covenant does secondarily include the will of its human participants, but in a democratic society there is only the interplay of human wills. For God to be a participant in such a polity would require the impossible admission of the political primacy of revelation. Democratic thinking quickly eliminated the Deistic notion that the natural order that it presupposes (however sketchily) requires positing the will of a primordial being to explain its origins: taken as a rational construct, society requires no such primordial origin at all. Natural rights do not need natural theology.

So, if God's will were all that religious persons had to bring to democratic society, there would be no opening there for such a gift. But God's will is not all that religious persons have to say about their God. They also speak of the wisdom of God. And the wisdom of God has a public significance in a secular democracy that the will of God cannot and should not have. If religiously committed Jews are going to be able to participate in democratic conversation, they will have to speak of the wisdom of God. The difference between speaking of the will of God and the wisdom of God is the difference between a theology of creation and a theology of revelation.

To speak of the will of God is to speak of an object that cannot be separated from its subject. To say, for example, "The Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron saying, . . . and the pig . . . from its flesh you shall not eat" (Leviticus 11:1-7) is to assert that the meaning of the prohibition of eating pork is a direct response to the will of God as revealed in the Torah. Whatever wisdom we perceive in this commandment is subsequent to our obedience to it.

But to speak of the wisdom of God is to speak of what can stand, at least initially, apart from the subject who speaks it. When we speak of something as being the product of the wisdom of God, we can see its meaning, at least initially, in and of itself. Thus, for example, we can appreciate the wisdom of the commandment "you shall not murder" (Exodus 20:13) before we eventually understand that its prescription is part of God's wisdom as creator of the universe and its nature in which moral law is an inherent ingredient. All of this is why Jews can speak persuasively in secular public space about the prohibition of murder in a way we cannot (and should not) speak about the prohibition of eating pork. And it is why the prohibition of murder is taken to be immediately universal and rationally perceivable.

An objection as old as Plato's "Euthyphro Problem" remains, however. If God has willed something because it is wise, and that wisdom is accessible to any rational person, then what difference does it make who has willed it? Is it not something that is always to be willed by anyone? The assertion of practical wisdom on any moral issue in secular, public space seems to eliminate the requirement that it be ultimately predicated of God. What does "of God" add to the discussion? Is it not a distraction, after all?

And yet, there is a way we can speak of the wisdom

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of God in a social context in which only *wisdom* is immediately intelligible. For to assert any wisdom is ultimately, for Jews, the wisdom by which God creates, structures, and sustains the world. Even if the assertion that this wisdom is God's might not have immediate meaning in a democratic conversation, it can, minimally, be asserted in that context as a statement of where one is *coming from*. That statement of origin is only irrelevant when one is required to affirm society as the primary locus of one's human association. Such an assertion, however, ultimately requires that we speak as though we were atheists. That price is simply too high to pay for any member of a traditional religious community, whatever the benefits of democratic society happen to be: "There is no wisdom, there is no understanding, and there is no counsel that can be set up against the Lord" (Proverbs 21:30). But the price is only required by the questionable assumption that democracy itself must be both one's society and one's community. It is based on the erroneous notion that democracy must create its own culture rather than drawing upon the practical wisdom of more primary cultures, cultures like Judaism that inevitably trace their wisdom back to the God who has created all and who has revealed Himself to them.

The issue is whether one is required to be a secularist in order to be a participant in secular space. And here is where the religious have a clear advantage over the secularists in a democratic conversation, for the religious are actually better able to constitute the secular as an abstraction from out of their own traditions of revelation than the secularists are able to postulate religion by deduction from a transcendental base. That constitution of the secular by the religious includes such attractive modern institutions as natural science and rights-based jurisprudence. But when the secularists postulate "religion," they must remove its cosmic dimension. A religion like Judaism, shorn of its cosmic dimension, is quickly unrecognizable. Jewish secularists who often call themselves "cultural Jews"—that is, Jews who want some of the substance of Jewish life (often called "Jewishness") without its form (better called "Judaism," best called "Torah")— not only distort the meaning of Jewish life, they also distort the meaning of culture. In the deepest sense, there is no "secular culture." I know of no historically transmitted culture that does not ultimately depend on some transcendent reality as its source.

Finally, here is the point where the idea of natural law must replace the idea of natural rights, at least in its modern version. Proponents of natural rights have usually assumed that basic human rights can be posited, without any ontology, by the construction of an elaborate fiction originally called the "social contract"—the artificial notion that society can be seen as the agreement between self-constituted individual persons who come to it from a "state of nature" or "original position." Of course, the argument is circular inasmuch as a contract presupposes a social context already in place.

If persons are seen as existing in traditional communties founded by revelatory events, however, then the social contract need not be an artificial construct. Society is founded when members of various communities have to come together to work out certain commonalities between them in order to live in peace. But they come as real bearers of older cultures, not as hypothetical historyless individuals from nowhere. Democracy works best when demands for totality are not placed upon it, but instead when the members of the respective communities can affirm the finite value of the social arrangement they have contracted and are always allowed to affirm the primary community from which they come and to which they must ever return. In John Rawls' helpful term, such intercultural political discourses are "overlapping consensuses." Even when democracy only attempts to function relatively, however, what might be termed the "cosmic" needs of its members frequently lead them to construct totalizing ideologies to satisfy those forgotten needs. For the "overlapping" to be more than just procedural, liberals will have to admit the reality of cosmic needs and the probability that historical religions provide the best context for their satisfaction.

Natural law in this context can be seen as what Kant called a "border concept." On the surface, it functions like the idea of natural rights, that is, it proposes rules, procedures, and principles for the governance of civil society. But unlike the idea of natural rights it does not claim to be self-constituting. By its real assertion of *nature*, it indicates that it is rooted in an order that transcends civil society.

The usual constitution of natural law in Western philosophy has been metaphysical. That is, the cosmic order in which natural law is rooted has been presented as something that is itself rationally evident. I think, though, that for a variety of reasons, both philosophical and theological, metaphysics is not the way to constitute natural law. It seems to me that it is better constituted by theological means out of a religious tradition itself, specifically out of the doctrine of creation and the wisdom of God. FT

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The Last Temptation Reconsidered

Carol Iannone

When presidential candidate Bob Dole castigated the entertainment industry for excessive and graphic use of violence, it was only the latest salvo in a culture war that has been raging for some time. Arguments over government funding of offensive art, renewed efforts to restrict pornography, initiatives to curb violence on television, and attention to smut in cyberspace all indicate a backlash against the ongoing "liberalization" of our allegedly puritanical society, manifest from the founding of *Playboy* to the controversy over Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*. Though the critic Simon Karlinsky declared that the publication of *Lolita* signalled at last the "collapse of the Victorian moralistic censorship that had persisted in Western countries till the end of the 1950s," it appears his pronouncement might have been premature.

As efforts to reverse the trend toward a lax society clearly gains ground, it may be worthwhile to look back at an earlier skirmish—one in which, I believe, the battle lines may have been drawn erroneously. Martin Scorsese's 1988 film *The Last Temptation of Christ* was based on Nikos Kazantzakis' 1955 novel in which Jesus appears as a tormented, fearful young man confused by sex and uncertain of his path in life. The film was condemned by virtually every Christian denomination, both here and abroad, was protested, picketed, subject to boycotts and bomb threats, and excluded from the titles carried by the huge Blockbuster Video chain.

Joseph Reilly of Morality in Media described the film as "an intentional attack on Christianity," and James Dobson of Focus on the Family warned ominously, "God is not mocked." In *Hollywood vs. America*, a classic account of the depredations Hollywood has visited on America since the 1960s, Michael Medved described *The Last Temptation of Christ* as rising from the "urge to assault the cherished recollections of even universally esteemed figures in our culture." Medved compares the film to *King David* (1985), the only other recent Hollywood film to treat biblical material, in which David is shown as "thoroughly embittered and disillusioned at the end of his life."

A summary of *The Last Temptation* would seem at first to sup-port this view. Jesus is shown at the outset as a lonely, masochistic soul full of self-contempt, plying his carpenter's trade making crosses for the Romans to use to crucify zealous Jews. He writhes and agonizes in fear and doubt over the voices and visions to which he is subject, whether from God or Satan he knows not. At one point he is shown watching while prostitute Mary Magdalene services a string of clients. Finally, he is shown tempted to leave the cross for the life of an ordinary man who knows the felicities of marriage, sex, and family: this is the "last temptation" that nearly wrenches away the meaning of his sacrifice.

The film drew criticism not only for its affront to conventional piety but also for aesthetic reasons, as Scorsese's usually sure artistry seemed to falter. Certain features of the film—such as Harvey Keitel's Judas with a Lower East Side accent—were extravagantly mocked by critics. The whole thing seemed a textbook case of blasphemy and artistic failure—a film both "silly and offensive," as reviewer Bruce Bawer put it.

And yet, many members of the opening day audiences who defied pickets and anathemas to see the film found it very moving. While opposition to the film is understandable, I believe it to have been in many ways wrongheaded. The fact that *The Last Temptation of Christ* has become shorthand for cultural degradation ought to disturb anyone who wants to preserve art's power to engage the moral imagina-

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tion. If cultural conservatism is not to produce a backlash against itself, we must distinguish between seriously attempted efforts within the legitimate bounds of artistic creativity and ad hoc throwaways like *Piss Christ.*

Even the offended Bruce Bawer acknowledged the film as "the work of people who thought they were doing something devout." The film, like the book, seems to take as given that God exists, that Jesus is the Messiah, that he performs miracles, and that the culmination of his mission lies not in social gospel or liberation theology or societal revolution or even ethical teaching, but in the Cross and all the Cross entails. Medved's comparison to *King David* is inaccurate inasmuch as this Jesus, far from ending in bitterness and disillusionment, realizes that his "last temptation" has come from Satan, repudiates it, and in the film's final frames triumphantly declaims on the Cross, "It is accomplished. It is accomplished."

Scorsese's desire to film *The Last Temptation of Christ* dated back to the seventies, and the project aroused opposition long before shooting even started. He lost Paramount Pictures as a producer when the studio heads decided the protest was simply too great to challenge, even after a studio-sponsored "theological seminar." Eventually, Scorsese was able to enlist Universal Studios behind him, but he decided to keep the budget to a meager Hollywood minimum of $7 million because the project was "not a commercial mainstream movie."

If his motives were not commercial, neither were they simply to shock. Scorsese claims he had learned "from a priest friend that the Kazantzakis book is used in seminaries, not as a substitute for the Gospels, but as a parable that is fresh and alive, which they can discuss and argue about. And this is what I hoped the film would do." Scorsese was raised a Catholic and at one point wanted to be a priest. Although he no longer practices his religion and has been married four times, Scorsese claims to be a believer still: "I believe that Jesus is fully divine," he has declared, "but the teaching at Catholic schools placed such an emphasis on the divine side that if Jesus walked into a room, you'd know he was God because he glowed in the dark," instead of being someone "you could sit down with, have dinner or a drink with."

For Scorsese, if Jesus was so easily, so effortlessly, so unambiguously divine, "then when the temptations came to him, surely it was easy to resist them because he was God. He could reject the temptation of power in the desert; he could reject especially the temptation of sex, and he could undergo the suffering on the Cross, because he knew what was going to happen." Thus, Scorsese was drawn to a portrayal of the human Christ who had to struggle with fleshly desires and limitations. It is the gradual assimilation of Jesus the man into Jesus the Christ, i.e., the quenching of all earthly fears and longings in the movement toward union with God, that brings out the meaning of the Cross.

If Scorsese's opponents don't acknowledge his sincerity, at the same time the defenders of the film oversimplify their support. Scorsese was assured by Bishop Paul More that it is "Christologically correct" to insist on Christ's human side, that the Gospels suggest it when, for example, "the Pharisees and the Sadducees complain about his eating and drinking, saying he wasn't in the tradition of prophets like John the Baptist." Critic David Ehrenstein notes that "the Scriptures indicate the importance of Jesus' human dimension," and producer Tom Pollock observed that some Christians "are very uncomfortable with the idea that Jesus is fully human."

Christian theology certainly holds that Jesus was fully human: it is as heretical to deny Christ's humanity as to deny his divinity. But the markers of Jesus' humanity in the Gospels (weeping at Lazarus' tomb or struggling in the garden) don't come close to the prolonged identity crisis of the film. As Ehrenstein himself daintily concedes, "the psychological depth" that is "prerequisite for fiction is bound to be strongly resisted when the character is Christ himself."

Moreover, it is helpful but insufficient to insist that the work is not meant to show the gospel story itself, as Scorsese does by introducing the film with a disclaimer to that effect. Clearly some of the plot is fabrication, but there is more than enough dialogue and connection with the Gospels to bring the thrill, or shock, of recognition. Likewise, insisting that the "last temptation" is only fantasy is insufficient to deflect all criticism (and in the film the coupling is more graphic than in the novel). Protests that the sex is performed for procreation within family are not totally unimportant but hardly sufficient when the man in question is the Son of God. It is true that Jesus repudiates the fantasy but, given the demands of fiction and film, it has to be depicted before it can be repudiated. Kazantzakis' widow, Eleni, thought that her husband had made the temptation scene too long and that readers need to realize the sequence is only a dream that passes in seconds. Kazantzakis tries for this effect by having the whole episode occur as Jesus utters the sentence, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" But the sequence is too long for the effect of instantaneousness to be achieved.

The Epistle to the Hebrews asserts of Jesus that he was "not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." There is a biblical basis for what Kazantzakis and Scorsese attempt, but their ultimate defense must lie in ordering their sensational material toward a new and higher understanding, toward what Flannery

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O'Connor meant by the "total effect."

Controversy over this retelling of the Christ tale did not begin with Scorsese. *The Last Temptation of Christ* almost led to Kazantzakis' excommunication from the Greek Orthodox Church. The novel was placed on the Roman Catholic Index of Forbidden Books, and Protestant fundamentalist groups in the United States tried to have it banned from libraries (thereby helping to make it a bestseller). Yet Kazantzakis was a serious spiritual seeker. His search took him through Bergson, Nietzsche, Buddha, Mussolini, Marx, and Lenin, but ultimately all roads led him back to Christ. The latter part of his career was devoted to an exploration of Christian concepts, not only in *The Last Temptation* but also in other novels, including *The Greek Passion* (1951), in which a Greek village under Turkish occupation becomes involved in staging a Passion Play, and *St. Francis* (1956). *The Last Temptation of Christ* is prefaced with his remarkable statement of spiritual and artistic purpose, an excerpt of which Scorsese uses to introduce the film, and and some of which appears in a fuller context in Kazantzakis' spiritual memoir, *Report to Greco* (1961).

> My principal anguish, and the wellspring of all my joys and sorrows, has been the incessant merciless battle between the spirit and the flesh. . . . Every man partakes of the divine nature in both his spirit and his flesh. That is why the mystery of Christ is not simply a mystery for a particular creed; it is universal. . . . Struggle between the flesh and the spirit, rebellion and resistance, reconciliation and submission, and finally—the supreme purpose of the struggle—union with God: this was the ascent taken by Christ, the ascent which he invites us to take as well, following in his bloody tracks. . . .
>
> If we are to be able to follow him, we must have a profound knowledge of His conflict, we must relive his anguish. . . . In order to mount to the Cross, the summit of sacrifice, and to God, the summit of immateriality, Christ passed through all the stages which the man who struggles passes through. All—and that is why his suffering is so familiar to us; that is why we pity him, and why his final victory seems to us so much our own future victory. That part of Christ's nature which was profoundly human helps us to understand him and love him and to pursue his Passion as though it were our own. If he had not within him this warm human element, he would never be able to touch our hearts with such assurance and tenderness; he would not be able to become a model for our lives. We struggle, we see him struggle also, and we find strength. We see that we are not all alone in the world; he is fighting at our side. . . .
>
> This book was written because I wanted to offer a supreme model to the man who struggles; I wanted to show him that he must not fear pain, temptation, or death—because all three can be conquered, all three have already been conquered.

The Last Temptation of Christ seems to me the effort of an ordinary man to understand Christ's sacrifice from the inside and to experience it as his own. In order to speak to modern man, arriving so late in the ages of belief, Jesus must be made to bear the infirmities of *our* age—the doubt, the angst, the fear and trembling, the existential dread, and yes, even the sexual obsessiveness. Moreover, in an age of complacent materialism Christ must be tempted not only by extraordinary evil but by the possibility of a life of ordinary pleasure as well—not only by lavish indulgence but also by the life of middle-class satisfactions.

Kazantzakis is not the only modern writer to reject the traditional picture of Christ. In his 1886 "Hymn to Proserpine," Algernon Charles Swinburne embroiders the dying words of the Roman Emperor Julian the Apostate, "Vicisti, Galilaee," to launch a defiant evocation of a pagan world of energy, spirit, and erotic color untainted by what he saw as the spectral pall of latter nineteenth century Christian religiosity: "Thou has conquered, O pale Galilean; the world has grown gray from thy breath." While Swinburne simply repudiated the Christ of tradition, the modernist writers in the next century would seek to revise, revision, reimagine him. Ezra Pound's engaging "Ballad of the Goodly Fere" (1909), for example, rejects what he took to be the effeminate Jesus of popular turn of the century piety in favor of a rugged masculine Anglo-Saxon hero: "No capon priest was the Goodly Fere / But a man o' men was he."

Other writers looked to the pre-Christian world of pagan gods brought vividly to modern consciousness by Sir James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* as an imaginative source of replenishment for what they saw as a dried up civilization. In D. H. Lawrence's novella *The Man Who Died* (1930), Jesus revives in the tomb only to reject his previous mission and become the lover of a priestess of Isis—making him, in effect, the reborn Osiris, the lost dismembered god for whom the goddess Isis searches. While Lawrence at least allows Christ to be an avatar of the god Osiris, Robert Graves' *King Jesus* (1946) has him defeated by the female powers of the earth. In this proto-feminist work Jesus fails to replace the cyclical law of nature with the transcendent masculine law of spirit that he preaches and finishes as another sacrifice to the powers of the goddess.

The total upending of the meaning of Christ by Lawrence and Graves caused no particular outcry (perhaps thanks to a lack of Christian vigilance in northern Europe), and it seems ironic that Kazantza-

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kis' retelling was the one to arouse controversy. (Far from having Christ yield to the gods that preceded him, Kazantzakis' Jesus absorbs all previous myths, including Osiris, and, furthermore, pointedly triumphs over the female powers that would bind him to the flesh.) But of course it is the very closeness that caused the trouble; the fiction in such elaborate retellings as that of Lawrence and Graves is easier to perceive.

Kazantzakis presents, and Scorsese generally follows, a four-fold division of Jesus' adult life. After a period of morbid doubt and dread, he journeys to an Essene-like enclave where is he freed of many of his besetting demons and emerges with enough strength and grace to heal and preach—though a little uncertainly and reluctantly, since each sign of his specialness brings him closer to the awesome realization that he is the anointed one. His message at first is a sweet and unnuanced flower child compendium of love, peace, acceptance, and forgiveness. But he is driven to a second stage by the harsh apocalyptic teaching of John the Baptist. He retreats to the desert, is sorely tempted, and emerges with a philosophy of the "ax"—the need to destroy the world's evil. He is for a time swayed into thinking he must be the messiah of the zealots who will transform the earth through revolution. Finally, he realizes, with the help of a vision from the prophet Isaiah, that his mission is to be the sacrifice, the complete and willing sacrifice of self that will "save the world," "save men from their sins," and show the triumph of the spirit over the flesh (or the "transubstantiation" of flesh into spirit, as Kazantzakis might put it). At the penultimate moment, however, Satan (who had promised in the desert that they would meet again) returns in disguise, claiming to be from God, and urges Jesus to relinquish the delusion that he is the Messiah, leave the Cross, and live a normal life instead.

It is not accidental that Kazantzakis, after creating a Christ figure in *The Greek Passion*, was led to the figure of Christ himself, for it allowed him to resolve several longstanding preoccupations. His early existential and anti-Christian view that God does not redeem man, but man God (delineated, among other places, in his 1927 work *The Saviors of God: Spiritual Exercises*), is reformed into a serious attempt at Christian theology when the man in question is known to be the redeemer sent by God. The Nietzschean nihilism of Kazantzakis' earlier writings is transcended here; though Jesus engages in the typically Nietzschean struggle to realize himself, the self he realizes is divine. Finally, bitterly disappointed by the failure of revolutionary Marxism, Kazantzakis could see Jesus as transcending politics toward the greatest revolution of all. Some commentators insist that Kazantzakis to the end was not a Christian and did not believe in God. It doesn't seem to matter in this work; his theology may not be orthodox but he believes in Christ, and that seems to suffice.

Scorsese follows the book with some faithfulness, although, despite the film's two hour and forty minute running time, much in the five-hundred-page novel is necessarily omitted. The director's low budget and tight shooting schedule may be reflected in what some have seen as unintentional parody and even tackiness in the final product; nevertheless, a great deal of the film works well. Much of the humor and odd contemporaneity is a deliberate attempt to avoid the glossiness of previous biblical films and make us experience the story as a reality. Some of the effects that were criticized were indeed intended, like Mary Magdalene's tattoos, forbidden by Jewish law but something a prostitute might wear to show her defiance, and the Apostles' New York accents, which make these rugged men seem like ordinary people we might know. (Kazantzakis famously wrote in the demotic Greek of everyday speech rather than in elevated literary Greek.) At the same time, many of the scenes are unabashedly mystical and preternatural.

So compelling is the overall conception and realization that Kazantzakis can be forgiven many of the excesses of his florid novel, and Scorsese the flaws in his film. It seems astonishing that in an age of self-assertion and spiritual greed, of lengthening lists of rights and escalating demands for entitlements, the centrality of self-sacrifice should be so clearly presented, without apology, without condescension, without dismissive psychologizing. (In the film, the idea of blood sacrifice is a continual source of imagery, from the wedding feast at Cana, at which a lamb is butchered, through the Passover during which animals are brought to the temple for slaughter while Jesus, the true sacrifice, ritually bathes in the temple pool, and finally to the Cross.)

The sensational material of the "last temptation" proves necessary in order to bring out the full idea of what the sacrifice entails and some sense of the need to transcend the simple and humanly understandable desire for self-satisfaction.

The unsaved world, the world without the Cross, although still part of Jesus' fantasy, is rendered convincingly bare and desolate. After his mostly satisfactory life as a paterfamilias, Jesus grows old and is near death. Forty years have passed and Jerusalem is burning—the march of history has continued without any change of course. Paul, because he feels that people need to believe in something, is preaching a false gospel based on the incomplete crucifixion that Jesus apparently underwent. The Apostles come to see Jesus and they are old, broken men. They reproach him for descending the Cross and leaving mankind without hope, kept going by lies and fictions during the brief, sometimes pleasant, sometimes miserable interlude before oblivion. It is then that Jesus sees Satan behind his fantasy and rejects it, begging the Father in a deeply affecting scene to take him back to the Cross, to "make a feast." In a

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moment, with complete and eager willingness, he is back, and "it is accomplished." The film memorably ends here, while the novel continues for one more sentence: "And it was as though he had said: Everything has begun." And one can believe that it has.

Kazantzakis wrote, "I never followed Christ's bloody journey to Golgotha with such terror, I never relived his Life and Passion with such intensity, such understanding and love, as during the days and nights when I wrote *The Last Temptation of Christ.*" Scorsese has said, with considerably less formality, that making the film helped him to know Jesus better. Many readers of the book and viewers of the film have shared these experiences to some extent and it can seem odd that Christians should want to condemn the works that brought that about. FT

Holy Unction

I

"Give me oil in my lamp,
keep me burning, burning, burning,"
we belted out on the Baptist church bus
bound for Camp Born Again,
refueled forever we knew for the faith
with the oil of the holy. Hallelujah!

II

Through the cracked, creaky
bedroom door of Aunt Martha's farmhouse,
we watched the pyx-eyed priest
choreograph his prayers, bend half-way down
for our uncle's sin and sickness,
smear his forehead with the grease
we wished on the hinges and the Holy Father's
sticking knees.

When, that same second,
our uncle coughed, a great rattling fit
clacking the four-poster against floor boards,
and the priest's thumb slipped,
and oil oozed along the web of wrinkles, down
toward my uncle's one unhearing ear, onto the pillowcase
—perfect circle of lubricant—we knew
the petition was heard

The wheezing stopped when he died.

III

In middle age,
I am the ailing one,
the father's hand beneath my Father's:
vestibule of oil poured upon my head.

Oh to hear once again
in the liquid on skin
the purity of the perfect one,
to smell in the pores the apostolic ointment,
the balm for the no-longer banished,
the penitent prodigal
anointed for death, for life.

Marjorie Maddox

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WHY A MONK AT SAINT LOUIS ABBEY?

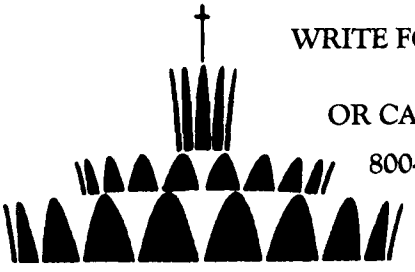
Our religion is essentially contemplative. It tells us that a man is risen from the dead and living forever with the power of God to transform human life. What is required of us is to pay attention to the spiritual, invisible, but real presence of this God-made-man, to focus on Him and accept His loving, healing, renewing activity in our lives. This spiritual attention requires a certain letting go of preoccupation with earthly things, and allowing space for His action, a silence, a self-denial, self-emptying, a withdrawal, in which all our powers are submitted to His direction. Energized by His life we return to the world to attempt to love and serve others as we are loved.

A monastery is a place set aside for this attentiveness to God with a view to submission to His transforming action in drawing the individual and the world to Himself. It is a place for alertness to God, friendship with Him, healing for the world. The life of a monk, the witness of a monastery are needed as much as ever in our world where noise, materialism, and the frenetic, frantic pursuit of pleasure are obscuring the call to the simplicity which leads to peace, the call of an infinite person who seeks to dwell with us. It is a happy vocation because in tune with fundamental realities: God, life, joy, the spirit, truth; and it ennobles the lives of others by handing on to them and modeling for them the Good News that offers something to live for, "reasons for living and hoping," a happy, meaningful life.

For the laying open of the self to the purifying action of Christ and His Spirit is the introduction into the community of divine and human persons that every human heart was made for and craves. In this way contemplation builds community. Even the sacrifices that the life entails, the crucifixion of self-indulgent desires that Christ and St. Paul speak of, are surrounded by the promise of joy and made endurable by a growing share in the life of Christ.

We seek men who

- seek union with God
- want to learn to live in Christian community
- want to hand on to people of our time values, wisdom, and hope.



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Books In Review

Instructing the Laity

THE SCANDAL OF PLEASURE: ART IN AN AGE OF FUNDAMENTALISM. By WENDY STEINER. *University of Chicago Press. 232 pp. $24.95.*

Reviewed by **Hilton Kramer**

IT WAS INEVITABLE, perhaps, that the "culture wars"—the debate that continues to rage over the impact of political correctness, multiculturalism, and their allied ideologies—would spawn a genre of liberal apologetics designed to exonerate liberalism itself from its role in abetting the establishment of radical doctrine as a mandatory standard of judgment in mainstream cultural life. It is in the nature of modern liberal thought, after all, to see its ideas and its passions as wholly innocent of malign consequences. We saw something like this happen in the 1930s in the alacrity with which American liberalism allied itself with Stalinist ideology and then, when the horrific consequences of the Soviet regime could no longer be denied, disclaimed any role in advancing the interests of Soviet totalitarianism.

It was not to be expected, then, that when the culture wars heated up and evidence of the malign consequences of radical doctrine became too great to be denied that liberals would acknowledge their role in serving as the conduit by means of which cultural radicalism achieved intellectual respectability. On every campus, in every media office, in every arts organization, government agency, and foundation, it has long been recognized that the radicals could not have succeeded in their "long march through the institutions" without the complaisant collaboration of the liberals who run these institutions. Yet now that the battle has been joined in the culture wars, the liberals are once again attempting to act as if they have all along served as disinterested noncombatants and enlightened observers of others' misdeeds and are therefore in a position to adjudicate the claims and counterclaims of the warring parties.

The bad faith that is implicit in this unearned posture of innocence is sometimes breathtaking to behold, and never more so than when its academic representatives condescend to offer instruction to "the laity" in the mysteries of art, the relation of art to life, and the niceties of critical discourse that deals with both. "The laity" is the patronizing term used by Professor Wendy Steiner in *The Scandal of Pleasure* to describe all those people in our society who, for reasons that remain unspecified in this book, persist in taking an interest in art and culture even though they are not possessed of the kind of privileged "acts of interpretation" that are reserved in our culture for "academics" like herself. In this cartoon version of contemporary cultural life, the role of the mandarin avant-garde is assigned to the "academics," while everyone else is consigned to an undifferentiated "laity."

FOR THE author of *The Scandal of Pleasure*, who is the Richard L. Fisher Professor of English and Chair of the English Department at the University of Pennsylvania, what the culture wars are mainly about is this "gulf" that is alleged to separate "the laity" from the "academics" in understanding art. Owing to this "gulf," the public—a.k.a. "the laity"—remains in a constant state of befuddlement about art. It is therefore the task of "academics" like Professor Steiner to set "the laity" straight about all questions having to do with the relation of art to life. Without such guidance, the uninstructed public is likely to mistake art for life and thus introduce all sorts of extraneous moral considerations into the discussion of art's social functions.

It is Professor Steiner's view that art must be seen to be "a virtual realm tied to the world by acts of interpretation," and these "acts of interpretation" can be performed only by "academics." In other words, art means what the professors tell us it means, and not what we may glean from our direct experience of it. Thus *The Scandal of Pleasure* is, among other things, "a plea to the public not to vilify those who have devoted their lives to understanding art." It is apparently permissible, however, to vilify anyone who disagrees with these academically sanctioned "acts of interpretation"—including, on occasion, those academics who do not qualify as "academics" in Professor Steiner's honorific sense because they do not perform these "acts of interpretation" in the requisite liberal manner. The late Allan Bloom, for example, is frequently cited for his failures in this regard. There is nothing more fatuous in *The Scandal of Pleasure* than the spectacle of Professor Steiner condescending to the author of *The Closing of the American Mind.* In this respect, *The Scandal of Pleasure* might more accurately be entitled *The Closed American Mind Strikes Back.*

THE SAD fact is that Professor Steiner is not much of a thinker. She attempts to test her theory of art as "a virtual realm tied to the world by acts of interpretation" by applying it to the Robert Mapplethorpe case. But what her defense of Mapplethorpe's pornographic pictures comes down to is, quite simply, that she likes them. While cautioning "the laity" that art belongs to the realm of "the virtual," where it is not to be mistaken for an experience of the real world, she promptly exits that sanitized realm by declaring that "I like all these provocations in Mapplethorpe's SM photographs." And again: "Perhaps most of all, I like Mapplethorpe's fearlessness in dramatizing his difference from me and from all those whose appetites have not led their bodies such a chase. Mapplethorpe stands there, a self-proclaimed devil, and warrants my rights to enjoy my own deviltries,

HILTON KRAMER *is Editor of the* New Criterion.

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cautious as they may be." And finally: "The point is that everything that involves aesthetic judgment involves a personal revelation of preference, of pleasure, and Mapplethorpe's photographs—formalist masterpieces that shatter formalism—raise us to this realization." These, presumably, are specimens of those "acts of interpretation" we are invited to embrace as guides to an understanding of art.

Notwithstanding its claim to be a book about "Art in an Age of Fundamentalism," *The Scandal of Pleasure* actually deals with the fate of art in our time in only the most cursory terms. Mapplethorpe is the sole visual artist whose work is considered in any detail, and Salman Rushdie the only novelist, and in both cases it is their respective ideologies—in the one case sexual, in the other political—that is Professor Steiner's principal concern.

The chapter on "The Literalism of the Left" casts a baleful glance at the radical feminist campaign against pornography as a way of establishing Professor Steiner's position as a liberal centrist in the culture wars, and then hastens to take cover by lavishing praise on Toni Morrison—one of the current idols of the politically correct academy. A chapter called "Caliban in the Ivory Tower" purports to examine the politically correct academy, and while acknowledging at the outset that "the excesses of politically correct behavior certainly deserve . . . derision," the discussion of this subject is mainly devoted to deriding the conservative critics—one of them my colleague Roger Kimball—who have succeeded in making this matter an issue of national debate.

There is also a chapter, "La Trahison des Clercs," which deals with what Professor Steiner calls "three cases of treason and textuality," reducing the discussion of Anthony Blunt's services to Stalin and those of Martin Heidegger and Paul de Man to Hitler and Nazism to new levels of academic imbecility. It is typical of Professor Steiner's "method"—if anything so intellectually shoddy and morally obtuse can be called a method—that she prefaces her approach to the discussion of Anthony Blunt's treachery by reminding us that "a surprising number of Yale English professors . . . have been actual spies." What she means, of course, is that Norman Holmes Pearson, Louis Martz, Richard Ellmann and others served their country by working for the OSS during the Second World War—service that is somehow seen by Professor Steiner to be morally equivalent to the very different kind of services performed by Blunt, Heidegger, and de Man. It is difficult to know in reading such stuff whether Professor Steiner is guilty of aestheticizing the history she purports to be examining or is merely being dumb about it.

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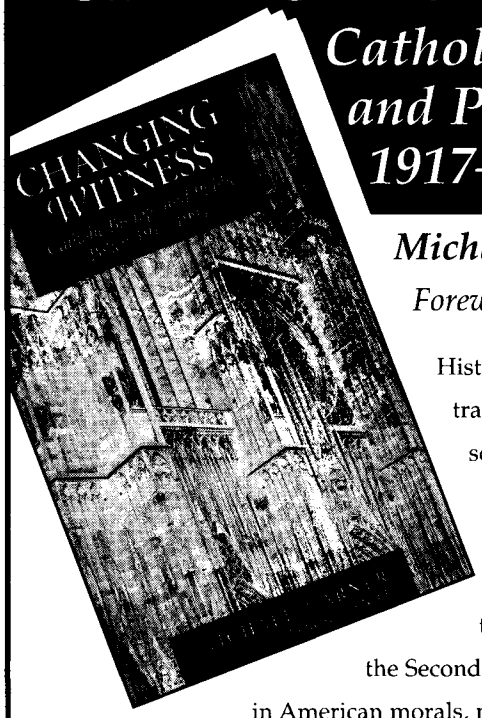

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From such discussions there is nothing, in any case, to be learned about art in our age or in any other. To apply such an absurd appellation, "Age of Fundamentalism," to the realities of American cultural life at the present moment does little more than illustrate the liberal paranoia that has become a standard feature of the academy since its politically correct programs and appointments came under attack by conservative critics. This conservative criticism has yet to be met by anything resembling a cogent and comprehensive response by the liberal academic establishment, which has largely resorted to strategies of calumny and demonization in dealing with every challenge to the status quo. Professor Steiner pretends to occupy some mythical political center in this particular theater of the culture wars, but from start to finish *The Scandal of Pleasure* is simply another liberal attempt to stop the debate.

Just occasionally, however, Professor Steiner inadvertently lets one or another cat out of the bag and gives us a glimpse into the real world of the politically correct university today. Discussing the problem of "canon reform" in the English Department over which she presides at the University of Pennsylvania, for example, she writes:

> In my own department, doctoral students must pass an oral examination on the canon. In the past ten years, responsive to PC debates, the exam has gone from a set of fifty prescribed texts to thirty-five prescribed and fifteen chosen by the candidate, to forty chosen from a pool of 350 possibilities and ten at the student's prerogative. Guidelines for the exam insure that the choices are spread over time, ethnicity, and gender. But since the traditionally trained faculty know primarily the old canon and their particular areas of expertise, they are unlikely to have read a good portion of any given student's elections. We could all take a year off from research and speed-read the essential works we somehow missed, but when a faculty of professionals are incompetent to test the canon, it might be more reasonable to assume that they are not testing a canon at all. The violent adjustments we make in the name of social justice sometimes undermine the feasibility of an academic discipline.

To this politically enforced collapse of an academic discipline, Professor Steiner's response is to attack William Bennett. *The Scandal of Pleasure* is itself a scandal, but not the one Ms. Steiner thought she was writing about.

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An Illiberal Democrat

JIHAD VS. MCWORLD: HOW THE WORLD IS BOTH FALLING APART AND COMING TOGETHER—AND WHAT THIS MEANS FOR DEMOCRACY. By BENJAMIN R. BARBER. *Times Books. 416 pp. $25.*

Reviewed by **Gary Rosen**

BENJAMIN BARBER, the director of the Walt Whitman Center for the Culture and Politics of Democracy at Rutgers University, is today's leading advocate of "participatory" democracy. Not content with mere representation, he aims to make every citizen a legislator, to bring about, as he puts it, "unmediated self-government." To this ambitious end, he speaks with remarkable single-mindedness on the academic conference circuit, celebrating the civic potential of the people and sounding, very often, less like a professor than a politician on the stump.

Barber's writings over the years have been dedicated both to promoting this ideal regime and, still more, to combating the currents of thought that are opposed to it. In his best-known work, *Strong Democracy* (1984), he criticized those modern philosophers—Hobbes, Locke, and Mill, among others—who define political liberty negatively (being left alone) rather than in positive terms (civic action). In *The Conquest of Politics* (1988), he denounced such contemporary political theorists as John Rawls, Robert Nozick, and Alasdair MacIntyre for their "abstractionism," saying that they ignored the practical concerns of the engaged citizen. And in *An Aristocracy of Everyone* (1992), he found enemies of democratic education at both ends of the political spectrum, in the fashionable relativism of the left and in the tradition-minded elitism of the right.

In his latest book, *Jihad vs. McWorld*, based on a 1992 article in the *Atlantic Monthly*, Barber turns from

GARY ROSEN, *a new contributor, is a Ph.D. candidate in political philosophy at Harvard University.*

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the intellectual threats to his vision of democracy to the socioeconomic ones. His title refers to what he sees as the two premier global trends of our day, movements that are, respectively, reducing the world to intractable fragments and giving it an unprecedented unity.

The book's first part concerns McWorld, the ever-expanding service sector of the international economy, especially as it manifests itself in what Barber calls the "infotainment telesector," American in substance if not always in ownership. He sums it up in a litany of brand names and pop icons: Disney and Paramount, Nike and Reebok, Madonna and MTV, Coke and Pepsi, Homer Simpson and Batman, Kentucky Fried Chicken and, needless to say, McDonald's. Relentlessly promoting its "ideology of fun" at the expense of local institutions and folkways, this "virtual economy" of images and lifestyles promises to become nothing less than a world "monoculture." For civic life, this is especially bad news, Barber contends. Manipulated by "promotion, spin, packaging, and advertising," citizens lose all interest in public matters, falling prey to "passive consumption" and devoting themselves exclusively to the satisfaction of their multiplying wants.

In the second part of the book, Barber takes up "Jihad." Moving beyond its strictly Islamic meaning, he understands it as any effort by a parochial community to protect itself from the cosmopolitan, universal standards of the West. It is a metaphor for "opposition to modernity." Accordingly, Jihad encompasses not only religious extremists like Hamas and Hezbollah but also a range of this-worldly chauvinisms, from Russia's Zhirinovsky and the Bosnian Serbs to the promoters of language rights and separatism in places like Quebec, Catalonia, and Occitan France. In its more virulent forms, this too is no boon for democracy. Inward-looking and narrow, the rivals of McWorld tend to favor violence, to disdain basic civil liberties, and to have serious reservations about political equality.

In the book's third and final section, Barber suggests how we might yet salvage a democratic future from the "tribalism" of Jihad and the "consumerism" of McWorld, invoking the much-discussed concept of civil society. In seeming agreement with many other observers, he argues that community groups and voluntary associations provide the "attitudinal resources" that make "democratic citizenship possible" and let "democratic institutions function effectively." It is this fragile social infrastructure that must be bolstered, he insists, but his proposal for doing so—the creation of a "global civil society" whose precise character he leaves to the reader's imagination—is a disappointing afterthought to the rest of the book.

PERMANENT THINGS

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This inspirational volume gathers eighteen essays on the work of C. S. Lewis, T. S. Eliot, G. K. Chesterton, Dorothy Sayers, and Evelyn Waugh — five of this century's most imaginative writers, each of whom gave voice to the permanence of Christian truth amid the secularist spirit of the age. The contributors to this volume are well-known scholars who themselves are concerned for the recovery of the Permanent Things.

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True to his cause, Barber writes here in the language and style of everyday politics. Though telltale bits of academic jargon creep into his prose at points, the book is essentially a journalistic polemic, a running commentary on today's headlines. Unfortunately, Barber has failed to notice that most editorials last a mere half-dozen paragraphs. His drags on for several hundred pages, sustained by exaggeration (media corporations control "the defining symbolic essentials of civilization"), repetition (he appeals for "full employment" no fewer than ten times), and an almost encyclopedic recitation of facts (we learn entirely too much about such things as world oil and mineral production and the viewing habits of Belgians and Pakistanis).

More importantly, Barber is positively evasive in *Jihad vs. McWorld* about his own notion of democracy, though he uses it as a benchmark throughout. At best, he leaves us with a bundle of adjectives and phrases: authentic self-government is "participatory," "deliberative," supportive of a "common culture," based on the "common will" of "autonomous" citizens. As his account suggests, however, these slogans are far from benign. Ever the disciple of Rousseau, whom he trots out from time to time in order to show the pedigree of his own views, Barber is committed to a democratic project that is both collectivist in its aims and profoundly illiberal in its implications.

One's suspicions are immediately raised by his refusal to acknowledge the contribution that McWorld—which is to say, international capitalism—has made to political liberalization in recent years in countries like Chile, South Korea, and Hungary. He dismisses the by now well-documented relationship between a prosperous private sector, an independent civil society, and the push for free elections and the rule of law. As he sees it, such change is too slow and indefinite to be credited.

More fundamentally, Barber is unwilling to grant that genuine freedom exists under democratic capitalism:

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> In [East Berlin's] Marx-Engelsplatz, the stolid, overbearing statues of Marx and Engels face east, as if seeking distant solace from Moscow: but now, circling them along the streets that surround the park that is their prison are chain eateries like T.G.I. Friday's, international hotels like the Radisson, and a circle of neon billboards mocking them with brand names like Panasonic, Coke, and GoldStar. New gods, but more liberty?

As Barber sees it, the availability of such consumer goods, in the old Communist bloc or elsewhere, is a direct challenge to nascent democracy. Such signs of commercial life represent not an expansion of economic opportunity but rather the onslaught of McWorld, which he repeatedly characterizes, without irony, as a new and insidious form of "totalitarianism." With its ability to "modify public attitudes" and to "precipitate private behaviors," McWorld predetermines our every choice, political or otherwise. Predictably enough, his chief evidence for such indoctrination is the electoral success of those with whom he disagrees, especially in those precincts where McWorld is most firmly established. As he angrily declares, few Western governments today—he singles out the U.S. and Britain—display a proper zeal for "regulation or control in the name of the public weal."

By contrast, Barber has difficulty disguising his sympathy for Jihad. It is not that he considers himself an antimodern. Rather, it is that Jihad, on closer inspection, is resistance not to modernity as such but only to a particular strain of it—to the "materialism, solipsism, and radical individualism" of the free market. Against these "more hollow values" of the Enlightenment, Barber arrays not only the outraged protests of reactionaries and fundamentalists but also the West's "nobler aspirations." Thus we discover that the gerontocrats in Beijing and the revamped East German Communist Party also share the jihadic impulse, struggling to maintain their distinctive "cultures" in the face of an aggressive world economy. In this "holy war," ayatollahs and commissars see eye to eye.

What's more, though Barber objects to some of Jihad's nastier political features, he also discovers democratic "potentialities" in it that are lacking in McWorld. With its "toxic exclusivity," Jihad lends itself to a civic life of "'we' thinking and 'we' action," one in which "democratic command structures" might be more fully involved in the "public choosing" of "fundamental social values." Barber specializes in such euphemisms for democratic tyranny. Like many other academic advocates of "communitarian identity politics," he assumes that there is some easy fit between individual rights and a public sphere that aspires to shape souls in a fundamental way, though history tells us otherwise. It is hard to know whether it is naiveté or just reckless indifference that leads him to cite ancient Athens, Puritan Massachusetts, and Jacobin France as democratic models. We would do well to recall the fates of Socrates, the "witches" of Salem, and many a hapless French aristocrat.

BARBER's commitment to so all-encompassing a notion of democratic politics explains his perfunctory treatment of civil society in *Jihad vs. McWorld*. With its roots in the private domains of family, neighborhood, and religion (and in the material well-being made possible by the free market), civil society can only serve for him as a transitional stage in which "to re-create citizens who will demand democracy." As he conceded in his earlier and far more candid book, *Strong Democracy*, the sort of "parochial" and "particularistic" attachment that is typical of civil society "subverts the wider ties" required by his grand design.

It is this willful indifference to the varied satisfactions available under liberal democracy that makes Barber's thought so exasperating. For him there is no middle ground, no way of life that can accommodate our many different needs. Every consumer of a Big Mac is a minion of McWorld; every religious believer is an antimodern fanatic; and neither, alas, is a proper citizen. In this hysterical and sloppily composed book, one searches in vain for that spirit of moderation that has made the American system so attractive to the rest of the world in this era of democratic renewal.

Naturalism on Trial

REASON IN THE BALANCE: THE CASE AGAINST NATURALISM IN SCIENCE, LAW, AND EDUCATION. By PHILLIP E. JOHNSON. *InterVarsity. 238 pp. $19.99.*

Reviewed by **Nancy R. Pearcey**

IN Richard Rorty's long march to becoming a postmodernist guru, the decisive step was his rejection of Christianity. In an autobiographical essay, Rorty writes that as a college student he sought a unified vision of

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truth and justice. He was at first attracted to Christianity, especially the Anglo-Catholicism in T. S. Eliot's poetry. But finding himself "incapable" of "the humility that Christianity demanded," he turned from religion to philosophy. Platonism had "all the advantages of religion" without its uncomfortable demands.

Yet he soon ran up against a familiar problem: Every philosophical system is built on first principles that, by definition, cannot be justified by prior philosophical principles. In frustration, Rorty writes, "I decided that only religion"—only an ultimate Being embodying love and justice—"could do the trick Plato wanted done." And since, once again, he "couldn't imagine becoming religious," he gave up hope of ever achieving a vision of absolute truth or goodness. And the rest, as they say, is history—or in Rorty's case, historicism, as he drifted first to Hegelianism and finally to Deweyan pragmatism. In his *Consequences of Pragmatism*, Rorty applauds pragmatists for disregarding "what propositions we believe" and for reducing statements to tools that "help us get what we want."

THE STORY IS retold in Phillip E. Johnson's *Reason in the Balance* to illustrate the consequences of rejecting Christian theism. Johnson argues that a host of contemporary debates—over postmodernism, feminism, abortion, education—are the result of a more fundamental debate between theism and naturalism: between the conviction that God created us and the conviction that we are products of solely natural forces. In the academy, naturalism has triumphed, leading down exactly the same path traced by Rorty in his personal odyssey: the reduction of truth to pragmatic strategies for "getting what we want."

The central battleground in this debate, Johnson insists, is Darwinian evolution. Naturalism attained cultural dominance only after Darwin provided a plausible naturalistic story of the origin of life forms. Rorty himself makes the connection explicit in a recent *New Republic* article: "Keeping faith with Darwin," he writes, means abandoning the concept of objective, transcendent truth and treating ideas as merely problem-solving tools that evolve as means of adapting to the environment. "The idea that one species of organism is, unlike all the others, oriented not just toward its own increased prosperity but toward Truth," Rorty argues, is frankly "un-Darwinian."

The link between postmodernism and Darwinism may at first seem a bit of a stretch. We're accustomed to an intellectual life bifurcated into what C. P. Snow in 1959 called "two cultures," with the humanities sharply split off from the sciences. Even in the elementary grades, many English teachers have tossed out their red pencils, insisting that grammar, logic, and even factual accuracy are artificial constructs imposed by the ruling class. Meanwhile, down the hall in the science classroom, educators still cling precariously to the Enlightenment notion of objective truth. Darwinian evolution is rarely open to question, and students are not invited to judge for themselves whether it is true or not.

Johnson's unique contribution is to show that these widely divergent approaches are in fact internally connected: It is *because* science is committed to Darwinism, he argues, that the humanities are in such a muddle of subjectivism and relativism. In the academic hierarchy, science is given authority to describe the world as it "really is." Hence Darwinism is regarded not only as a biological theory concerned with genes and selection but also as the factual basis for naturalistic philosophy. As historian Neal Gillespie writes, "Darwin's rejection of special creation was part of the transformation of biology into a positive science, one committed to thoroughly naturalistic explanations based on material causes and the uniformity

NANCY R. PEARCEY *is Fellow and Policy Director of the Wilberforce Forum, and coauthor with Charles Thaxton of* The Soul of Science *(Crossway).*

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of nature." Or, as biologist Richard Dawkins puts it, Darwin "made it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist."

NATURALISM, materialism, and atheism are roughly equivalent terms in this context to express the conviction that nature is all there is—that there exists no transcendent or spiritual realm. Once naturalism was enshrined as orthodoxy in science, Johnson argues, it became the foundational assumption in every other academic field.

Take law, the subject Johnson has taught for almost thirty years at the University of California at Berkeley. In the traditionalist view, positive law is based on a transcendent moral order—often called natural law, generally conceived ultimately as divine law. But if Darwinism is true, then life has no divine creator and there is no divine law or transcendent moral order. Morality and justice are merely ideas the human mind invents when it has evolved to a certain level. Hence there is no final, authoritative basis for law—no answer to what law professor Arthur Leff whimsically calls "the grand 'sez who?' " American legal theory reflects the views of Oliver Wendell Holmes, an avowed Darwinian, who taught that law is simply a matter of imposing political and economic policies judged to be socially advantageous. In short, law is whatever the sociologist or economist "sez" it should be.

Again, consider sex education. The traditionalist side is manned largely by theists, who believe a transcendent God created us for a purpose. A person who ignores the Creator is ignoring the most important part of reality—clearly an irrational thing to do. The most rational approach to sex ethics is to ask what God's purpose was in creating humans as sexual beings and what we must do to fulfill that purpose.

Naturalism, on the other hand, claims that God did not create us, we created Him—or rather, we created the *idea* of God. He "exists" only in the minds of religious believers. In that case, the most rational course is to relegate religion to the realm of wishful thinking and to base sex ethics squarely on what is real—on scientific knowledge and personal experience. Hence the nondirective approach to sex education, which introduces students in clinical terms to a host of sexual alternatives while encouraging them to make up their own minds, is completely logical.

Piling example on example, Johnson pushes current debates back to their starting points in theism or naturalism. His primary audience consists of fellow theists, yet along the way he has picked up some surprising allies, including several hard-nosed atheists. For example, he and Cornell biologist William Provine "have become the friendliest of adversaries," Johnson writes. While the two men disagree on whether evolution actually happened, both insist that a consistent Darwinism is corrosive of traditional beliefs and morality.

And both are impatient with those who want to keep a foot in each camp—to have their Darwinism and keep their theism, too. Many Christian academicians have made peace with Darwin by adopting forms of theistic evolution, ceding science to the naturalists and relegating God's activity to a realm accessible solely to the eyes of faith, undetectable to science. For example, the Christian philosopher Nancey Murphy writes, "For better or worse, we have inherited a view of science as *methodologically* atheistic." To which Johnson tartly replies, why should Christians let the atheists make the rules? If a supernatural Creator really exists, He just might have chosen to do some creating. It's silly to speak as though the Almighty God is forbidden to affect nature. And if theism is true, then it's not at all obvious that valid scientific theories can be achieved only by making the counterfactual assumption that atheism is true.

INDEED, that assumption has produced bad science, Johnson argues. It forces biologists to accept even weak theories so long as they are naturalistic. Darwinism itself is the prime example. Observational evidence cited for Darwinism consists of minor variations, akin to those routinely produced by farmers and breeders. For example, in a *New York Times* article, Jonathan Weiner describes a study of Darwin's famous finches: The finches' beaks grew larger in dry seasons, when the seeds they eat were tough and hard, but grew smaller again after a rainy season, when tiny seeds became available once more. This is evolution happening "before [our] very eyes," Weiner writes.

But as Johnson points out, it is precisely the opposite. The change in finch beaks, he argues, is a minor, cyclical fluctuation that allows the finches to adapt and survive. Translation: It's a small adjustment that allow finches to *stay finches.* It does not demonstrate that finches are evolving into another kind of bird, nor that they evolved originally from another kind of organism. It's odd that a mechanism permitting an

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organism's major features to remain unchanged should be cited as evidence for a theory of limitless change.

Moreover, the naturalistic assumption compels biologists to ignore the overwhelming evidence for purpose and design that can be read right off the face of nature. It seems intuitively obvious that eyes are designed for seeing, ears for hearing, and fins for swimming. Even dyed-in-the-wool atheists such as Dawkins acknowledge the prima facie evidence of purpose: his definition of biology is "the study of complicated things that give the appearance of having been designed for a purpose." The goal of Darwinism is to demonstrate that, contrary to appearances, these complicated things are really the product of random changes and natural laws.

But a century and a half after Darwin, that goal has not been reached. (The scientific failures of Darwinism are discussed at length in Johnson's first book, *Darwin on Trial*, and outlined only briefly here.) The meager factual basis for Darwinism makes plausible Johnson's thesis that the major reason for the theory's dominance is not science but philosophy: It reassures secularists that they don't have to worry about a Creator.

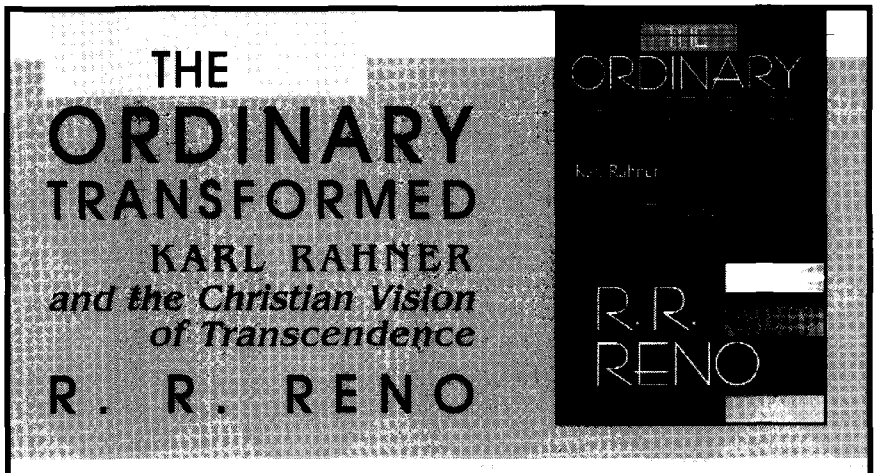
In making his case, Johnson adopts a somewhat episodic approach, jumping from theoretical arguments to current issues to practical strategies for advancing a theistic point of view. (Don't say you want to introduce a new *subject*—religion—into the school curriculum, Johnson advises. Instead, say you want to offer a Christian *viewpoint* on an existing subject, such as science or sex education. "Viewpoint discrimination" has been ruled unconstitutional.) The current issues Johnson analyzes will be familiar to readers who follow cultural controversies closely, yet all will benefit from the book's clarity as it hammers away at the central point: Once you admit Darwinian evolution, God becomes a fiction, and everything else in postmodern culture flows from that. Secularists may be friendly toward religion, viewing it as harmless and even morally uplifting, or they may be hostile. But when the chips are down, they see religion as a fantasy, and the sooner believers grasp that, the sooner we will be able to counter what Johnson calls "the subtext of contempt" running through so many public debates today.

The Domesticated Nietzsche

NIETZSCHE: THE ETHICS OF AN IMMORALIST. By PETER BERKOWITZ. *Harvard University Press. 313 pp. $35.*

Reviewed by **Werner J. Dannhauser**

A CONSENSUS ABOUT the meaning of Nietzsche's philosophy continues to



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University of Notre Dame

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elude us. One might have thought, for example, that a man who praises cruelty, denounces pity, and entertains the idea of mass exterminations bears some responsibility for the triumphs of fascism after his death in 1900. Yet the grossly oversimplified idea of Nietzsche as Nazi soon brought on the titanic and successful efforts of Walter Kaufmann to portray him as a liberal with an excessive polemical zest. When I first began teaching Nietzsche, his strident bluster about male superiority quite rightly offended my sensitive female students, but of late feminism has transformed all too many women from his intelligent enemies into his stupid friends. The former darling of the right has become the present darling of the left because of his matchless knack for exposing the foibles of the bourgeoisie. Recently, postmodernists of various stripes have held sway, persuading many that Nietzsche had no positive teaching at all and certainly exposed all moral evaluations as untenable. Their Nietzsche has no truths to convey because there *are* none; there are merely slippery "takes" on an unknowable reality: perspectivity is all.

In a valiant attempt to halt this dreary march of nonsense, Peter Berkowitz takes the field with a bold and intriguing new reading. *Nietzsche: The Ethics of an Immoralist* is at its best when it challenges those dogmatic pieties of postmodernists that threaten to contaminate serious inquiry. Postmodernism has its roots in the philosophy of Martin Heidegger, whom Berkowitz correctly characterizes as both a great reader and misreader of Nietzsche. Heidegger's successors seem to have inherited only the misreading. Perspectivism even at its best narrows what one can learn from Nietzsche by concentrating on epistemological conundrums rather than on Nietzsche's subtle insight into the whole breadth of human life. At its worst it is simply incoherent, with its advocates dogmatically pronouncing the absolute truth that there is no absolute truth.

Today's fashionable writers on Nietzsche have also exempted themselves from the imperatives of "philosophical cleanliness" so dear to Nietzsche's heart. Convinced that all interpretation is arbitrary, they arbitrarily tear snippets of Nietzsche from their context and use them as inkblots in a Rorschach test. Unfortunately, Nietzsche's love of writing aphorisms encourages this practice, as does Heidegger's forceful but also willful reading of texts: today's critics of Nietzsche tend to be Heideggerians without Heidegger's genius.

BY CONTRAST, Peter Berkowitz is able to say something new about Nietzsche because he resorts to older ways of reading. He usually respects Nietzsche's intentions and he carefully considers a whole series of Nietzsche's books as wholes, concentrating on *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and *Beyond Good and Evil*, but picking out other crucial works, from the earliest *Birth of Tragedy* to the very late *Antichrist*.

The interpretation that emerges from Berkowitz's sensible and sensitive reading always commands respect and usually elicits agreement. As the subtitles suggest, he concentrates on Nietzsche's "reflections on the best life" and he articulates "the ethics of an immoralist." Nietzsche teaches us that the highest life is the life of human *creativity*, and that human excellence can be understood and communicated objectively.

Nietzsche's overwhelming concern with the best way to live puts him very much into the mainstream of the history of philosophy (notwithstanding his indisputable modernity) and even of the history of political philosophy (notwithstanding his contempt for, and denigration of, political life in the interest of the solitary creative individual). Berkowitz's Nietzsche believes in "right making based on right knowing"; his thought is strongly anchored in metaphysics and he is thus more than a bit of a Platonist. To be sure, he is also something more, or at least something else. One finds in Nietzsche's thought "the distinctive clash between ancient and modern." The latter element can be seen above all in his emphasis on an unbridled will that masters even necessity. Nietzsche seriously plays with the idea of self-deification: after the death of God, men must become gods. An abiding tension, an "unresolved antagonism," runs through Nietzsche's thinking. Because there can be no final overcoming of overcoming, according to Berkowitz, "Nietzsche's teaching, at the climactic moment, shatters." Yet the intellectual conscience that drove Nietzsche to his chilling thought experiment is worthy of our emulation. We must come to terms with the "formidable challenge of his philosophical explorations." Berkowitz provides us with an admiring portrait of Nietzsche's thought without ever succumbing to the temptation of becoming a Nietzschean.

WERNER J. DANNHAUSER *is Visiting Professor of Political Science at Michigan State University.*

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UNFORTUNATELY, I am compelled to add that the author is not uniformly persuasive and not always successful in his endeavors. Berkowitz commendably enough sets out to characterize Nietzsche's thought as full of tantalizing ambiguities, intriguing ambivalences, as an "unresolved contest of extremes." But in his zealous attempt to defend Nietzsche—at times even when he is not being attacked—he yields to the temptation of resolving that tension and viewing Nietzsche as a direct descendant of Socrates. There is indeed much to be said for reclaiming Nietzsche for the great tradition of Western thought, but Berkowitz tends to overdo it.

It is surely the case, to cite one example, that Nietzsche has been too simplistically charged with being a Fascist, but Berkowitz's repetitive emphasis on the antipolitical aspect of Nietzsche's thinking goes too far. Berkowitz admits that Nietzsche despised democratic politics but argues that Nietzsche despised *all* politics. And yet, isn't that because Nietzsche thought all politics, and modern politics especially, to be too democratic? Berkowitz is certainly aware of the late Nietzsche's emphasis on the "great politics" of the future, but he confines his discussion and dismissal of this frightening concept to a single page.

This tendency—to play up one extreme of Nietzsche's thought while playing down the other—runs throughout the book, and that is a pity because Berkowitz is almost uniquely qualified to do justice to the complexity of Nietzsche's thought. All of his analyses teem with genuine insight, but all too often he mars his labors by overemphasizing one thing and neglecting something else. Thus, when writing of *The Birth of Tragedy*, he reveals much about Nietzsche's aesthetics but fails to do justice to the clearly anti-Aristotelian thrust. Thus, too, when analyzing the *Antichrist*, Berkowitz correctly points to what one might call Nietzsche's Enlightenment "curse on Christendom," but he does not fully reveal its rhetorical excesses, as when Nietzsche refers to Jesus Christ as an "idiot."

One wants to overlook such one-sidedness, for it seems to be driven by the commendable urge to slay the pernicious dragon of perspectivism, but after a while one feels the perspectivists ought to have been allowed to hang themselves. After all, there *are* perspectival elements in Nietzsche's thought, as Peter Berkowitz knows and admits.

The favorite text for perspectivists is *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, a weird and wild book that some of us non-perspectivists think of as also wonderful. Since it comes across as, in part, a massive assault on reason and rationality, it is grist for the mill of relativists and nihilists of all persuasions. It is an articulation of Zarathustra's way, but Zarathustra also claims that *the* way does not exist. It is a book with which Berkowitz is compelled to wrestle, and wrestle he does, in more than a hundred densely argued pages, that could and should have been the high point of his analysis. They are not.

PART OF THE trouble lies in Berkowitz's tone. One finds in these chapters a perplexing hostility to Zarathustra himself, who is after all only a character in the book. Berkowitz relentlessly exaggerates the amount of poisonous resentment in Zarathustra, skirts inaccuracy by describing him as "comatose" in Book III, and claims that in Book IV Zarathustra is "prematurely gray" (though no one knows how old he is). Worst of all, he turns a resolutely deaf ear to Zarathustra's beautiful utterances. Though aware of Nietzsche's stylistic splendors, Berkowitz mocks Zarathustra's frequent bombast, but does not praise beautiful phrases like "arrows of longing for the other shore" or the sweeping rhythms of the "Night Song."

Even if one overlooks the author's reluctance fully to acknowledge the aid and comfort provided to postmodernists by Nietzsche's doctrine of the Will to Power, one must be disappointed by Berkowitz's failure to deal adequately with the doctrine of the Eternal Return of the Same, both in itself and in its problematic relation to the doctrine of the Will to Power. The analysis begins with the flippant remark that "the Eternal Return is fundamental to *Zarathustra* much as the San Andreas Fault is a basic part of the California Coastal region" and goes on to write of Zarathustra's "humiliating surrender to the lust for eternity." Berkowitz never discusses the possibility that Zarathustra's love of eternity might be the love of time itself rather than of anything that transcends time; he has little to say about the Eternal Return as a cosmological doctrine, and the analysis of the speeches devoted to this most difficult doctrine strike one as more interested in scoring points than shedding light. It is not very helpful to think of Part IV of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as a "retreat" from the doctrine of the Eternal Return of the Same; that retreat owes much more to the author's ingenuity and imagination than anything Nietzsche actu-

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ally wrote. The same must be said of Berkowitz's attempt to characterize the book as a whole as a failed "thought experiment." Commendably dedicated to trying to understand Nietzsche as he understood himself, Berkowitz sometimes comes close to claiming to understand Nietzsche *better* than he understood himself.

ONE MUST hasten to add, however, that Peter Berkowitz's analysis of *Beyond Good and Evil* far exceeds his exegesis of *Zarathustra*. He obviously thinks that *Beyond Good and Evil* is more beautiful (a preference he shares with that most excellent of commentators on Nietzsche, Leo Strauss). Berkowitz should have paid more attention to the final aphorism and to Nietzsche's tantalizing description of "the great stupidity we are," but on the whole he provides us with a model of productive commentary.

The same can be said of much of the book. Peter Berkowitz sometimes disappoints us, but that may be because his work demands to be judged by the highest standards. The book he has written needs some fixing, but it surely isn't broken. In Berkowitz's hands, Nietzsche undergoes a somewhat excessive domestication, but that is what may be needed just now.

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Roundup of Books on Waco

THE DAVIDIAN MASSACRE: DISTURBING QUESTIONS ABOUT WACO WHICH MUST BE ANSWERED. By CAROL MOORE. *Gun Owners of America & Legacy Communications. 488 pp. $8.*

THE ASHES OF WACO: AN INVESTIGATION. By DICK J. REAVIS. *Simon & Schuster. 304 pp. $24.*

WHY WACO? CULTS AND THE BATTLE FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN AMERICA. By JAMES D. TABOR and EUGENE V. GALLAGHER. *University of California Press. 242 pp. $24.95.*

ARMAGEDDON IN WACO: CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE BRANCH DAVIDIAN CONFLICT. Edited by STUART A. WRIGHT. *University of Chicago Press. 387 pp. $49.95 cloth, $15.95 paper.*

***Reviewed by* Dean M. Kelley**

WHEN YOU have a sore tooth, your tongue just won't leave it alone. For some of us, the tragedy at Waco in 1993 is like that—an unhealed wound in the body politic. Four books have appeared in the past several months that probe the Waco trauma and offer insights into what went wrong and what should be set right.

Carol Moore's mass paperback is the most recent offering and the only one to include reflections on the recent inconclusive and turbulent House hearings last fall, which brought on some knowledgeable witnesses who had not hitherto been heard, but drowned their evidence in partisan bickering by committee members who did not know what questions to ask or what had already been answered in the criminal trial last year but wanted maximum TV exposure. Much was made of the CS gas that was injected into Mt. Carmel by some four hundred "ferret rounds," for example, but little note was taken of forty times as much of the same gas sprayed by tanks. The soluent of the ferret rounds was methylene chloride—a hazardous material as toxic as CS—but what was the soluent of the tanks' spray? Ethanol was found in the bodies at autopsy, suggesting a highly flammable soluent. That question was not explored.

Carol Moore has written a polemic against the government worthy of the organization to which she has devoted more than two years of work—the Committee for Waco Justice, which has staged demonstrations in Washington to protest what they view as crimes by the federal agencies. Her book is copublished by Gun Owners of America and highlights issues of interest to opponents of gun control and of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, but it is not untrustworthy because of that.

Of the four works reviewed here, it is the most thickly packed with details, complete with emotive characterizations and imputation of sinister motives to government agents. But the author is not just a polemicist. She rejects some allegations as unlikely, such as the claim (made in the civil suit brought by Ramsey Clark on behalf of Mt. Carmel's heirs and survivors) that the FBI planted an explosive on top of the concrete vault where the women and children had taken refuge, blowing a hole in the ceiling and killing all within. Moore inclines to the view that the tanks had already skewed the frame building on its foundations so that stairways were shattered: the Davidians could not escape from the second floor, and the FBI agents could not ascend to plant a thermite bomb. (But the large hole still is unexplained; how did it get there?) If one reads this volume with a critical eye, one can learn a lot from it that is not available elsewhere (such as information from the 1993 Congressional hearings, which Carol Moore attended).

JOURNALIST Dick Reavis left his job in Dallas to spend a couple of years

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DEAN M. KELLEY, *Counselor on Religious Liberty for the National Council of Churches, wrote "Waco: A Massacre and Its Aftermath"* (FIRST THINGS, *May 1995*).

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researching the Waco incident because he was distressed to discover that no other journalist was probing beneath the FBI's handouts. As part of his research—perhaps the hardest part—he steeped himself for six months in the Bible and in the theological lore of the Adventist movement, which had been going on for a century and a half before David Koresh came along. He read tracts and listened to tapes of Koresh, and the result is that more than a sixth of the book's pages are devoted to explaining the conceptual world in which the Davidians lived—which the Feds and their "expert" advisers never did penetrate.

Reavis also interviewed surviving Davidians, read the 7,500 pages of trial transcript (it turns out that the copy I got when in Waco was from his set) and the 18,000 classified pages of transcripts of negotiations from the fifty-one day siege. (Reavis won't reveal how he got them, except to insist he did nothing illegal.) His book is rich in detail, though perhaps not so rich as Moore's. He simply relates the narrative in a straightforward, factual way without much interpretive "spin." This is probably the best book of the four if one wants a single survey of the situation from a nongovernmental perspective.

JAMES TABOR and Eugene Gallagher are professors of religious studies at the University of North Carolina and Connecticut College, respectively. They have written a more scholarly treatment of the subject that focuses less on the details of the events at Waco and more on the dynamics of what brought them about.

Their chief subject is the role and influence of the anticult movement, not so much on the ATF and FBI in their actions of early 1993, but in the formation of a pervasive anticult animus and stereotype that has become endemic over the past two decades in the American public's thinking—or rather nonthinking—about new or "oddball" religious groups, and that naturally affects federal agents, juries, judges, and reporters. Tabor and Gallagher trace the coverage of the Waco events by mass media, quickie books, TV talk shows, and "documentaries"—almost all of which purveyed a hostile misunderstanding of the situation. For more than a year the public was getting only one side of the story, since those who could have supplied "the other side" were incommunicado—under siege, in jail, disregarded, or dead.

This volume understandably highlights the effort by Tabor and Philip Arnold of the Reunion Institute in Houston to reach David Koresh during the siege through his own sphere of discourse and to suggest a slightly different scenario for the Seven Seals that would not involve a violent confrontation. As a result of their efforts, Koresh began to write his exposition of the Seven Seals and sent out a letter on April 14 promising to surrender when he finished. (Tabor and Arnold estimate that at the rate he was working, he should have completed work in a week or two.) The FBI brushed off their efforts on the grounds that this was just another delaying tactic by Koresh. He completed an introduction and the First Seal on Sunday night, April 18, but the gas attack began the next morning. His secretary, Ruth Riddle, barely escaped the fire and brought out on a computer disk what he had done. It was later recovered and transcribed and is appended to the Tabor-Gallagher volume.

The unfinished essay by Koresh proves the FBI was wrong about Koresh's promise, but they didn't know that at the time. They had only the experience of the preceding weeks, which looked like shifty stalling to them because they never understood what motivated the people they were confronting. The government has produced some forty plastic-wrapped charred firearms allegedly found in the ruins of Mt. Carmel (but won't let independent firearms experts examine them), and those are supposed to prove that the search and arrest warrants—and the raid to serve them—were justified. But ex post facto evidence does not prove anything about justification of decisions made before such evidence was known—in either case.

THE FOURTH BOOK is a collection of essays by academic and other observers, each of which focuses on a particular aspect of the Waco tragedy. Stuart Wright, professor of sociology at Lamar University in Beaumont, Texas, has done a good job in recruiting and coordinating these analyses of the perplexing melange that is Waco. Anson Shupe and Jeffrey Hadden analyze the five narratives competing for the attention of the public, and James Richardson dissects the cross-pressures on the reporters trying to interpret the unfolding events with constant demands from their editors for copy and with a paucity of data available beyond the daily press briefings staged by the FBI. Robert Fogarty relates the little-known stories of the tragic ends of other religious innovators of recent centuries. Bill Pitts of Baylor explains the lineage of Seventh-day Adventist off-

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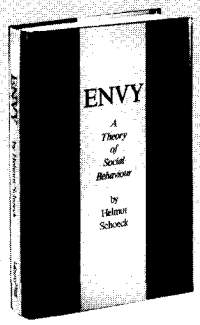

In *Envy*, Helmut Schoeck shows that the egalitarian impulse as well as the totalitarian state is rooted in envy. As Schoeck observes, " ... many well-meant proposals for the 'good society' ... are doomed because they are based on the false premise that this must be a society in which there is nothing left for anyone to envy."

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shoots that became Davidians, and then Branch Davidians, and then "Students of the Seven Seals" under Koresh. David Bromley and Edward Silver describe the evolution of the Mt. Carmel community from "patronal clan" to "prophetic movement." John R. Hall suggests how the anticult-fostered image of Jonestown was persistently projected on Mt. Carmel through the atrocity-anticipation of "mass suicide." Ed Gaffney reviews the legal and constitutional considerations, concluding that the warrants were not stale or insufficient (which only shows how the concept of "probable cause" has deteriorated), but that the method used to serve them was excessive.

These four works are labors of concern for which we should be grateful to their devoted authors, who will not grow rich on the proceeds. They provide needed balance to the two years of government stonewalling that reached new heights at the House hearings. The prevailing view in government circles has been that the law enforcement actions at Waco—aside from a few missteps in execution—were necessary, justified, and right. These four volumes and their various authors have one thing in common: they contend that what happened there was unnecessary, unjustified, and wrong. Which version will prevail only history will tell.

BRIEFLY NOTED

THE BENEDICTIONAL OF AETHELWOLD. By ROBERT DESHMAN. *Princeton University Press. 287 pp. $99.50.*

A true historian of art, Robert Deshman asserts that images are the equal of texts as historical documents. In this monograph on one of the most important medieval Anglo-Saxon illuminated manuscripts, he thoroughly demonstrates the point by an intensive study of the iconographic symbolism underlying the manuscript's illustrations. Examining the intricate connections between the miniatures, their Carolingian and Byzantine stylistic precursors, and the Benedictional's text (comprised of the blessings pronounced just before communion), Deshman uncovers recurring themes that unite the illuminations into a systematic cycle. Artistic elements that the modern viewer might take to be merely decorative or incidental prove instead to represent complex theological concepts that parallel medieval exegesis and liturgy. Further, Deshman relates the artistic program to its immediate historical context: the patron, Bishop Aethelwold of Winchester (963-984), worked closely with King Edgar on monastic reform, and both monastic and royal themes run through the illustrations. Deshman perhaps errs on the side of exhaustiveness in sections, but the book's clearly organized format makes for easy perusal. Lavish illustrations, with color reproductions of the manuscript miniatures and over 200 b&w photographs of comparative material.

— *Jeanne Nuechterlein*

SCIENCE AND THE FOUNDING FATHERS. By I. BERNARD COHEN. *Norton. 368 pp. $25.*

Thomas Jefferson never much liked politics, or so he said. Were it not for the "enormities of the times," he would never have left the "tranquil pursuits of science." Following up the suggestion (made by Woodrow Wilson in 1907) that the Constitution is a Newtonian document, Prof. Cohen explores the extent of the Founders' scientific knowledge and the influence of science in the early days of the revolution. In his thorough account of the literary history of the phrase "the laws of nature," the author demonstrates its almost universal association with the laws of motion and argues that a scientific understanding of "the laws of nature" makes Jefferson's claim of "self-evident" truths more intelligible. Prof. Cohen is right to turn to Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* for a strictly scientific account of "the law of nature," but his failure to discuss *A View of the Rights of British America*—where Jefferson uses the phrase in a purely political context—weakens his analysis and leaves him incapable of explaining exactly how "laws of motion" entitle "one people" to assume a "separate and equal station . . . among the powers of the earth." Newtonian, non-teleological "laws of nature" provide no sanction for human actions; one does not declare independence from the British Crown by appealing to Newton. *Science and the Founding Fathers* fills a void in contemporary scholarship by bringing a comprehensive knowledge of early modern science to bear upon the Founders' thought. We still require, however, an explanation of the interplay between that science and the political philosophy that also filled the Founders' minds.

— *Brian H. Hook*

ESSAYS IN THE THEOLOGY OF CULTURE. By ROBERT W. JENSON. *Eerdmans. 224 pp. $16.99 paper.*

A regular contributor to this journal, Jenson is one of the most exciting theological minds at work today. These twenty-two essays, written from 1966 to the present, are loosely held together by the theme of "theology of culture," although for some it is a reach. They track Jenson's steady, albeit frequently eccentric, move toward a more culturally conservative and catholic (also Catholic) understanding of God's ways with the world. The essays are always lively and instructive, and almost always convincing. Warmly recommended.

GOD OWES US NOTHING: A BRIEF REMARK ON PASCAL'S RELIGION AND ON THE SPIRIT OF JANSENISM. By LESZEK KOLAKOWSKI. *University of Chicago Press. 238 pp. $22.50.*

This would be a marvelously important book—if only the Jesuits had been right about the Jansenists, the Jansenists about the Jesuits, and Christian theology limited to a choice between the two. Professor Kolakowski is a major scholar of Pascal, and his interpretations of

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Pascal's Wager and the more abstruse aphorisms in the *Pensées* are very helpful. So, too, his readable history of the Port Royal followers of Jansenius helps explain the influence men like the Abbé de Saint-Cyran, Antoine Arnauld, and Pierre Nicole had on French thought. When he claims, however, that the Jesuit and Molinist opponents of Jansenism thought that mere outward obedience to God's commandments compels God to save us, or, worse, when he writes that "Jansenism is faultlessly derived from Augustine's theology," he betrays a serious misunderstanding of the main streams of Christian theology. The Church has always attempted, not so much to split the difference between Jansenism and Pelagianism, as to affirm a *mystery*: at one and the same time the freedom of human beings to receive efficacious grace and the freedom of God to confer it. Professor Kolakowski has performed a real service in placing Pascal and the Jansenists in their immediate historical context. The work of discerning their place in the whole of Christian history, however, still remains to be done.

THE ELEPHANTS TEACH: CREATIVE WRITING SINCE 1880. By D. G. MYERS. *Prentice Hall. 224 pp. $29.50.*

"What's next?" demanded one language professor when Vladimir Nabakov was proposed for a chair in literature at Harvard. "Shall we appoint elephants to teach zoology?" But, in the years following World War II, colleges and universities all around the country (but perhaps most famously the University of Iowa) began appointing writers themselves to teach writing, and the objections of the scholars and the philologists were swept aside. Indeed, such objections were taken by innovative deans and English department heads as what validated the appointment of writers—for the sterile world of academia, in which each generation of teachers produced nothing more than the next generation of teachers, was exactly what the innovators wanted to dismantle. A funny thing happened along the way, however, and in clear prose and careful scholarship David Myers, an English professor at Texas A&M, tells the story of how what was supposed to free English literature from the trap of academic disciplines became itself an academic discipline—a discipline that, with its established procedures and validating Ph.D. degrees, prepares a generation of writers for the task of teaching the next generation of writers how to teach the teaching of writing.

THE BIBLE, THE CHURCH, AND AUTHORITY. By JOSEPH T. LIENHARD. *Liturgical Press. 108 pp. $9.95 paper.*

This is a simply splendid little book that should be welcomed by Protestants and Catholics who are not quite sure about how to make the connections between Bible, Church, and authority. The authority, says Lienhard, is Jesus Christ, and it is Christ's authority exercised by the Church that establishes the canon and thereby makes the Bible the text of the worshiping and proclaiming community. Lienhard very helpfully lays out the ways in which, historically and at present, preaching depends on scholarship and scholarship on preaching. The argument throughout is straightforward and eminently accessible.

DEHUMANIZING THE VULNERABLE: WHEN WORD GAMES TAKE LIVES. By William Brennan. *Loyola University Press. 285 pp. $22.95.*

What Orwell did in the mode of prophetic imagination William Brennan, professor of sociology at St. Louis University, does in cool historical retrospective. The idea that language "creates" reality is not new, indeed it is the orthodoxy of postmodernism in its several traditions. But perhaps nobody has brought together with such sustained analytical skill the history of deliberate rhetorical maneuvers to put beyond the bounds of the human those who are slated for destruction—from Native Americans in the last century to the unborn children of this century. A contribution as disturbing as it is valuable.

THE SIGN OF THE CROSS. By COLM TOIBIN. *Pantheon. 296 pp. $24.*

An Irish author offers up essays of considerable literary grace on his "travels in Catholic Europe"—Ireland, Spain, Croatia, Rome, and so forth. He conveys with disarming simplicity the feel of different ways of being Catholic, and if "the Catholic thing" sometimes comes across as nostalgic indulgence, the effect is moving nonetheless.

THE DECALOGUE AND A HUMAN FUTURE. By PAUL L. LEHMANN. *Eerdmans. 232 pp. $17.95.*

Lehmann, who died in 1994, taught at Union Theological Seminary, New York, for many years and was one of the leading influences in Protestant theological ethics in this century. Devoted to the law/gospel, sin/grace dichotomies of the Lutheran tradition, Lehmann came down left of center on most disputed questions, but did so with a thoughtfulness that today has a decreasing audience in the liberal Protestant milieu.

THE GODLESS CONSTITUTION: THE CASE AGAINST RELIGIOUS CORRECTNESS. By ISAAC KRAMNICK and R. LAURENCE MOORE. *Norton. 224 pp. $22.*

The authors call this a polemic, and so it is. Not all that polemical, however, except when they get to the odious "religious right." For the most part, it is a conventional retelling of the strong separationist version of the country's constitutional founding. The subtitle, the authors tell us, is an effort to turn on its head the charge of political correctness—to which charge they, with good reason, plead guilty.

WORKS OF LOVE. By SØREN KIERKEGAARD. *Princeton University Press. 561 pp. $65.*

Translated and edited by Howard and Edna Hong, that redoubtable

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couple at St. Olaf College who have done more than anyone to bring Kierkegaard to a new generation, this work is located at the midpoint of SK's reflections on love and, some suggest, represents the high point of his analysis of the sources and forms of love. A must for Kierkegaard scholars and for the many others for whom he is a guiding star in the spiritual and intellectual life.

AMERICAN LIVES: CULTURAL DIFFERENCES, INDIVIDUAL DISTINCTION. By AMY A. KASS. *Golden Owl (Amawalk, NY 10501). 480 pp. $29.95 paper.*

Kass, a distinguished teacher at the University of Chicago who has appeared in these pages, offers an anthology of American autobiography that includes, among others, Benjamin Franklin, Jacob Riis, Frederick Douglas, Dick Gregory, Richard Rodriguez, and Theodore Roosevelt. Autobiographical excerpts are laced with insightful commentary and suggestions for discussion, making the book a valuable aid for teachers who want to address what it means to be an American—and a person of distinction.

FIGHTING FOR LIBERTY AND VIRTUE: POLITICAL AND CULTURAL WARS IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY AMERICA. By MARVIN OLASKY. *Crossway. 316 pp. $25.*

The author is very hot in Washington these days, being a chief proponent of reviving civil society to meet the needs of the disadvantaged. In the present book he argues that what we now call the culture war was very much a factor in the country's founding period. Writing from an evangelical Protestant viewpoint, Olasky may strain the analogies from time to time, but he succeeds in bringing vividly to life the conflicts that surrounded the founding, and his depiction of Washington, John Adams, Franklin, and others is a bracing antidote to histories that suggest Jefferson (and the narrowly deist Jefferson at that) was the only founding father.

DEITY AND DOMINATION. By DAVID NICHOLLS. *Routledge. 336 pp. $18.95 paper.*

The subtitle is "Images of God and the State in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century," and English theologian Nicholls provides an informed tour of the ways in which theologians, philosophers, and poets have construed the "rule" of God. A scholarly work that is attentive to the Great Tradition and is decidedly on the side of "a God who has enemies"—as distinct from a God who is a general meeter of needs and soother of anxieties.

SPIRITUAL PILGRIMAGE: TEXTS ON JEWS AND JUDAISM 1979-1995. By JOHN PAUL II. *Crossroad. 208 pp. $19.95 paper.*

This pope, more than any of his predecessors, has pressed home the continuing covenantal connection between Jews and Christians. Here are texts, edited by Eugene J. Fisher of the Catholic bishops conference and Rabbi Leon Klenicki of ADL, drawn from the beginning of John Paul II's pontificate. An important contribution to the dialogue.

UNASHAMED ANGLICANISM. By STEPHEN SYKES. *Abingdon. 233 pp. $16.95 paper.*

The author, who is bishop of Ely and one of the most respected of Anglican theologians, acknowledges that there is a defensive note in his title. Anglicanism, especially in England and this country, is commonly depicted as a decadent, limp-wristed, woolly minded vestige of a dying establishment. Sykes is well aware of that, but he goes back to the early divines (e.g., Cranmer, Hooker, Herbert) and traces their "Anglican genius" up through the present, arguing that while Anglicanism may be "untidy," that's the way the Church has always been through the ages. The book is a thoughtfully elegant apologia that may cause some disparagers of the Anglican *via media* to have second thoughts.

THE LUCK BUSINESS. By ROBERT GOODMAN. *Free Press. 273 pp. $23.*

Those who think that the public concern about gambling is a vestigial piece of Protestant moralism should start thinking again. And a good place to begin that rethinking is with this book, whose subtitle tells the story, "The Devastating Consequences and Broken Promises of America's Gambling Explosion." In 1988, only two states allowed casino gambling; now twenty-three do. States and municipalities trying to make up for revenue shortfalls looked enviously at places like Nevada and decided to keep all that money at home. That's just the problem, Goodman convincingly argues. What they kept at home, what they brought home, are the baneful consequences of gambling, including bankrupt gamblers, people who lose their jobs, and the inevitable criminal activities generated by the accumulation of unmanageable debts. Moreover, the political process is further corrupted when governments exploit human weaknesses, especially the weaknesses of the poor, to raise revenues for which politicians are not accountable to taxpayers. Morally, economically, and politically, the "luck business" is a shell game in which everybody but the crooks and the pols they control loses in a big way.

CHRISTOLOGY: A BIBLICAL, HISTORICAL, AND SYSTEMATIC STUDY OF JESUS. By GERALD O'COLLINS, S.J. *Oxford University Press. 333 pp. $58.*

An ambitious and scholarly work that engages the full stretch of the Christian tradition while concentrating on Christological studies of the last hundred years. In treating the various images of Christ and his saving work, O'Collins emphasizes his "presence" and the Christian relationship with Christ as one of Augustinian friendship. A worthy contribution to a discussion that will end only with the return of its subject in glory.

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From Death to Life: The Christian Journey. By Christoph Schönborn. *Ignatius. 192 pp. $12.95 paper.*

The author, recently made archbishop of Vienna, offers a theological-devotional reflection on "the last things." He effectively contends against contemporary Christianity's neglect of death and the hope of life eternal. Solid food for serious Christians.

Religion and Politics in America. By Robert Booth Fowler and Allen D. Hertzke. *Westview. 287 pp. $18.95 paper.*

Two political scientists—Fowler at the University of Wisconsin and Hertzke at the University of Oklahoma—provide an informative overview of the twists and turns in the troubling, and always surprising, connections between religion and politics. One thing they make clear is that nobody should be surprised by (although people are always protesting) the mixing of religion and politics. For a general road map of the developments of the last thirty years and an intelligent guide to those that may still be ahead, *Religion and Politics in America* is warmly recommended.

The HarperCollins Dictionary of Religion. Edited by Jonathan Z. Smith with the American Academy of Religion. *HarperCollins. 1,153 pp. $45.*

A lot of book for the money, although the cheap paper seems to have been recycled once too often. "The current unprecedented popular movement toward religious and spiritual awakening," the publishers announce, "has created a thirst for new knowledge." To slake that thirst, they are proud to provide "a consummate one-volume A-Z guide—bringing to all readers the people, places, concepts, practices, and writings of the entire religious world." Well, not quite. There are many useful bits and pieces here, but of practically nothing is there a satisfactory discussion, most entries being just a few lines. Nor are the interspersed "feature articles" of unknown authorship particularly helpful. Try telling everything you need to know about Christianity in twenty-seven pages. Nonetheless, it is a reference work that is worth having on hand, although readers might want to wait until it comes out in paperback.

Brain Music

No God would make a world in such poor taste,
scoffed Darwin, thinking of blind nature's waste,
of creatures duplicate, ungainly, vile:
too many mollusks, slime without soul or style.
Better to hope the blood-lust brutes displayed
allowed the strong to shine like hammered blades,
that pyramids of dead led up to man.
The worst pain is the one without a plan.
Rather amoral pattern, godless law,
than thoughtless lion's rank and hollow maw,
a meaningless decease, like Darwin's daughter,
ill, dying young. His theory made this slaughter
proof-text of pain, her childhood's sacrifice
near swallowed up in what it symbolized:
no Jesus healing with miraculous kiss,
just laws reliable and pitiless,
a world with no grace and no randomness.
Patterns in beasts' acts are the sole witness
to a design by irony inspired:
when scientists mapped how the neurons fired
in the cortex of the brain when learning,
on-screen a melody was coldly burning.
Whether the deed that's learned is right or wrong,
each synapse pattern plays an (unsigned) song.

Jendi Reiter

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THE PUBLIC SQUARE

A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

Richard John Neuhaus

Counting By Race

Last fall the nation was seized by a spasm of race-related excitements. Not really, of course. Most people were going about their daily business. But the media had elected race as the crisis of the season, and the chattering classes couldn't get enough of it. (But then, where does that put us as we chatter on about the chattering classes?) In fact, the spasm was not simply the product of media hype, although it was inseparable from that disease. Among the publicly attentive, even the most sober minds suspected that some major change in black-white relations may be underway—or at least a major change in the way we think and talk about black-white relations. The immediate occasion for the excitements can be stated briefly: O. J., Farrakhan, Powell.

My friend Jim Nuechterlein has thoughtfully opined on the O. J. verdict ("O. J. Simpson and the American Dilemma," December 1995), and most people probably feel they've had enough of that subject. If I could add but one word, it is that all the post-verdict talk about blacks and whites "perceiving reality" in incompatible ways was great grist for second-hand deconstructionists in the media, and played nicely into the new tolerance for racial separatism in our public discourse. Certainly Minister Louis Farrakhan was pleased; almost as pleased as he had a right to be by the more than 400,000 black men who turned out for his Million Man March. About that event the editorial line was that we must distinguish the message from the messenger, and it is true that the mostly middle-class black men who gathered in Washington seemed to be affirming, in a most welcome way, fairly traditional truths about personal and family responsibility. Their being there also testified to their recognition of a racist, anti-Semitic, anti-Catholic, hatemongering separatist as a legitimate leader of black Americans. Maybe even the premier leader.

Then there was Colin Powell. One could not help but be amused by the fervor with which liberal Democrats touted him for the Republican nomination. Fearing that their political party had self-destructed, they hoped he would take over the Republican Party on their behalf. Seeing the game afoot, some conservatives, far from being amused, went into a frenzy of strident and unfair criticism of Powell, threatening to bolt if he is on the Republican ticket. As it happened, Powell declined to run (although not very convincingly foreclosing the number two spot) and the election was left to the usual suspects. The whole thing was a marvelous exercise in what Milan Kundera calls the imagology that has replaced ideology. The O. J. image: Omigod, we really are two nations, separate and hateful. The Farrakhan image: Blacks are embracing the separatism they claim has been forced upon them. The Powell image: The Great Black Hope (not too black, many thought) who will bring us together again.

A Catalog of Discontents

Always relishing a good show, the gods of public theater contrived to publish, smack in the middle of all this, Dinesh D'Souza's *The End of Racism* (Free Press), a big, fat, seven hundred-page tract that provides whites with countless reasons for disliking blacks, and blacks with as many reasons for disliking themselves. Dinesh is a friend and an honorable man, and that is not what he intended to write, but sometimes a project gets out of hand and arguments get hijacked for purposes one did not have in mind. Anyone who writes regularly on topics in dispute knows the experience. Some reviewers peremptorily condemned the book as racist, which is false. But it is easier than engaging arguments and evidence that must make any thoughtful person uneasy.

Although author and publisher make no secret of their intending the book to be Controversial!, it has in fact generated relatively little public debate. Certainly nothing like the furor surrounding the 1994 study, *The Bell Curve*, by Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray, which purportedly

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demonstrated, not to put too fine a point on it, the cognitive inferiority of most blacks. One reason, no doubt, is that, unlike Herrnstein and Murray, D'Souza is not an established scholar but a young journalist with a penchant for the provocative. And provocative he certainly is.

Among the arguments he makes in detail is that slavery is not some uniquely American sin about which we need feel eternally guilty. Until the nineteenth century, slavery was a near universal institution, and it continues on a sizable scale in parts of the world today. The remarkable thing is not that the American South had slaves but that the American North didn't; and even more remarkable is the achievement of the West in abolishing slavery. On this question, D'Souza follows an argument that has been made very effectively by Thomas Sowell over the years.

The end of racism in D'Souza's title refers to "scientific racism"—i.e., the theories developed by some of the best and most respectable thinkers over the centuries in order to explain why Africans, Asians, and other "primitive people" lagged so far behind the advanced societies of the West. The title refers, secondarily, to what is ordinarily called white racism in this country, which by almost all relevant studies has dramatically declined and is today effectively ostracized. It is very much part of D'Souza's purpose to debunk the myth of white racism and other notions invoked to support affirmative action programs, which, he rightly contends, inevitably end up with quotas. Here he is at his muckraking best in exposing what quotas have done in education and employment. The quota system also invades business. For instance, special deals in buying and selling television stations are set aside for the "disadvantaged"—disadvantage being defined by race. Vernon Jordan and other civil rights leaders, as they used to be called, have made big money on such deals. He might have noted that two other disadvantaged millionaires, O. J. Simpson and Colin Powell, have taken advantage of these provisions designed to help the alleged victims of racism.

D'Souza makes much of "rational discrimination," meaning, for example, that cabdrivers and storekeepers, whether black or white, rationally shy away from dealing with black males of a certain age and demeanor. That, he contends convincingly, is not usefully or accurately described as racism. And I think no one could come away from the evidence he produces and still claim that "black racism" is not an appropriate and necessary term. D'Souza's conclusion is that there are three possible explanations for the sad state of so many black Americans, especially the millions in the urban underclass. It is the burden of the book to demonstrate that it cannot be explained by white racism. He also rejects—although he does not argue his rejection—the explanation of genetic inferiority along the lines suggested by *The Bell Curve*. And so he comes down on the side of civilization or culture as the key. Blacks in trouble are suffering the consequences of a pathological black civilization, and blacks are chiefly—at points he comes close to saying solely—responsible for their unhappy plight.

People who really do not like blacks but feel guilty about that will come away from this book feeling much better about themselves. That is certainly not D'Souza's intent, but he could and should have been much more careful in preventing his book from being used as an apologia for white racism. The odious racial views of a Mark Fuhrman, the police officer in the O. J. trial, are relatively rare, but they are not so rare that we can forget the imperative of stigmatizing them as odious. D'Souza certainly does not deny that imperative, but neither does it play a conspicuous part in his depiction of race relations today.

"For all its variety the black community nevertheless maintains a distinct and recognizable black culture," he writes. That's partly true, and therefore partly false. In his telling, the variety does not come through nearly as much as it should. Not all the streets of the inner city are "irrigated with blood, urine, and alcohol." And that is far from being the only thing, or the main thing, to be said about those streets that are. From my seventeen years at St. John's in Brooklyn, I know there are honorable, hardworking, courageous people on those streets as well. And it is by no means the case, as many readers of D'Souza's book might be led to infer, that all middle-class blacks are filled with guilt and resentment stemming from their being beneficiaries of unjust preferments. Nor do many, perhaps most, blacks share the angry alienation from America that D'Souza takes to be a mark of "the black culture." *The End of Racism* contains a great deal that is true, and painful, and necessary to ponder. The enemies of political correctness may be excused for relishing it. But exposing the falsehoods and fatuities that distort our thinking about race in America, while a necessary task, is not sufficient for dealing with the problems that are upon us.

"Benign" Race Consciousness

Many who have thought hard about these problems have now reached the conclusion that our original sin—or at least since the civil rights acts of the early 1960s—was to start counting by race. The usual way of putting this is to say that Dr. King had it right when he said in his great "dream" speech of 1963 that people should be judged not by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. Morality and the common good have a curious way of hanging out together, and Dr. King was right, both morally and in terms of public policy. As Glenn Loury, the distinguished black thinker at Boston

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University, has observed, once we start counting by race in order to benefit blacks, we invite those who do not have the interest of blacks at heart to do a complete count of the black reality, including much that in the recent past was not mentioned in polite company.

Of course we are told by voices on all points of the political spectrum that "color-blindness" is a naive ideal. What is naive and not at all ideal, however, is the idea that the government should continue to count by race. People cannot always be color-blind, and one can make the case that sometimes taking race into account is appropriate and necessary. But the government can and must be color-blind—as in "equality under the law." Part of the problem with governmental race counting is that the government can't do it and doesn't do it. How does the U.S. Census decide who is white and who is black? It doesn't. You do, by saying you are black or white or whatever.

Yet great interests are at stake in race counting. Government grants, voting districts, school transfers, and much else is determined by the race count. If your claim is contested, the "one drop rule" of any blood other than Caucasian gets you counted as a minority, with attendant entitlements. The 1990 census says 80 percent of Americans are white, 12 percent are black, about 9 percent are Hispanic, and nearly 3 percent Asian. Recognizing the arbitrariness of the count, Census officials are talking about adding other categories, including "multiracial." Not surprisingly, minority activists strongly oppose this, fearing any dilution of their numbers and their consequent claim on benefits aimed at compensating them for their "disadvantage." This state of affairs, more and more Americans are realizing, is simply crazy; and dangerously crazy because it inevitably exacerbates the race consciousness that has so plagued our history.

The civil rights movement under Dr. King was largely successful in fighting malign race consciousness. The great mistake since then was to institutionalize a supposedly benign race consciousness that has generated new and potentially greater racial suspicion and hostility than we had before the Montgomery bus boycott of 1956. Jorge Amselle of the Center for Equal Opportunity, a Washington think tank headed by Linda Chavez, the former director of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, says, "You don't cure the problem of people treating each other differently because of race by having government treat people differently because of race. If you want a color-blind society, you have to have color-blind public policy." That puts it very nicely.

It may be that there will always be racial discrimination in America, and most of it not very "rational." Some have suggested that real color-blindness requires racial intermarriage almost as the national norm, but that doesn't seem to be in the offing. The census says that in 1990 there were 242,000 black-and-white couples, double the number in 1980, and up 375 percent since 1960. But that is still only 2.2 percent of the married population. The most basic discrimination in America, despite laws against it, is in housing—in the dynamics that determine where people live. And it may not be accurate to call this discrimination. Nobody has studied these matters longer or more intelligently than Harvard social scientist Nathan Glazer.

Then and Now

In the Fall 1995 issue of the *Public Interest*, Glazer notes that the overwhelming majority of blacks, both poor and affluent, live in overwhelmingly black neighborhoods. At the same time, the overwhelming majority of blacks and a majority of whites say they would like to live in an integrated neighborhood. One problem is that blacks define "integrated" as 50-50, while "whites have little tolerance for racial mixture beyond 20 percent black." It has been the case for years, both in the city and in suburbs, that anything above 25 percent black is the tipping point at which neighborhoods begin to become resegregated as black. The residential racial mix that people, both black and white, prefer inevitably will have a strong bearing on the racial configuration of neighborhoods.

Glazer invokes a demonstration by Thomas Schelling that he calls "elegant and decisive." "Take a checkerboard and distribute nickels and dimes on it at random, with ten percent of the coins nickels and a few spaces empty. Then move one coin at a time into an empty space, with only this rule: The nickel would like to have at least one of its neighboring spaces occupied by a nickel and the dime would like to have one of its neighboring spaces occupied by a dime. In a relatively few moves, the nickels begin to concentrate in one section of the checkerboard. If the preference is for two neighboring nickels, or two neighboring dimes, the concentration will occur faster." Is this a result of prejudice or of preference, and how do you tell the difference? Experience counts. "It is not easy to separate out from prejudice the influence of fears that, with an increase in black occupancy, crime will increase, schools will decline, and house values will drop." People prefer not to live in neighborhoods where these things happen. On these matters, there is no difference between whites and blacks on what constitutes a "bad neighborhood." Those who can move out do move out. And the checkerboard effect remains relentlessly in play.

Glazer's is a melancholy reflection on what he hoped for thirty years ago and what he has learned since. "Government action can never match, in scale and impact, the crescive effects of individual,

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voluntary decision. This is what has raised group after group, this is what has broken down the boundaries of ethnicity and race (yes, race, when it comes to some races) in the past. But these effects have operated excruciatingly slowly when it comes to American blacks. They have operated to some extent, as we see by the greatly expanded number of blacks making middle-class incomes, by the creation of integrated middle-class neighborhoods. It is the scale that has been so disappointing. Why our expectations were so disappointed is still obscure to me, and all the research does not make it clearer. We have to go to the disaster that encompasses the black family, the failure to close educational achievement gaps, the rise of worklessness among black males, the increase in crime, and, behind all these, there are other factors in infinite regress.

"This failure leads many to propose larger-scale government action, unlikely as the prospects for such are in the present and foreseeable political climate. But even if that climate were better, it is hard to see what government programs could achieve. They would be opposed by the strongest motives that move men and women: their concern for family, children, and property. However wrong I was in expecting more rapid change to result from the civil rights revolution, a greater measure of government effort to promote residential integration directly was not the answer, and is still not the answer. The forces that will produce it are still individual and voluntaristic, rather than governmental and authoritative. To adapt the title of Glenn Loury's book, it will have to be 'one by one,' individual by individual, family by family, neighborhood by neighborhood. Slowly as these work, there is really no alternative."

Bliss It Was To Be Alive

I, too, look back. More than thirty years, to when I first began to march with Dr. King. The manifestos, the demonstrations, the vigils, the arrests and jailings, it all seems like only yesterday. Those of us on the cutting edge of the movement were called prophetic, and were praised for the sacrifices we made and the risks we took. Little did people know. It was the joy of being part of something grand and indubitably good. "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, but to be young was very Heaven." With Dr. King, I believed that what Gunnar Myrdal had called "the American dilemma" was turning out to be something like the redemption of the American experiment. I recall Dr. King saying over a leisurely lunch, "If we die tomorrow, we will know, and history will know, and God will know that we did our part." Heady stuff, that. But it was not yesterday. It was a long, long time ago.

The O. J. verdict, Farrakhan, and the widespread desire, even a palpable yearning, for a leader such as Colin Powell. The rubble of broken dreams, the stark terror of broken lives in the urban underclass. It is a very different time. Books such as *The Bell Curve* and *The End of Racism* add to our awareness that it is a different time. It is a time of candor when thoughtful people who do not have a racist bone in their body are exposing the lies of a civil rights establishment and its liberal claque that have no legitimate claim on the luminous moment that was the civil rights movement of Dr. King. It is also a dangerous time when permission slips are being issued to say things heretofore forbidden. The haters, white and black, are taking heart.

But for most Americans it is probably a time of disappointment mixed with relief. They feel that over these thirty years they have done what they were supposed to do, and it did not work out at all the way they hoped. So now they have decided that, unless they or their families are threatened by it, they are going to stop worrying about race relations in America. They have decided to stop even thinking about it. One feels one should argue against that decision, but it is hard to know just how.

For those of us who will not, maybe because we cannot, stop worrying and talking about it, several resolves are in order. When we speak about black America, and especially about the underclass, we must speak with respect for the humanity of others. The dope-pusher, the rutting teenager who is father of five and father to none, the thug who kills the Korean grocer, they are all, nonetheless, created in the image of God. That is not liberal sentimentality. That is hard-core Christian doctrine. People who want to get back to basics must want to get back also to that. As much as possible, we must think and speak in a color-blind manner. Social problems in America are human problems. They are not only "their" problems, they are also our problems. Yes, there are important differences in culpability. But as the late Abraham Joshua Heschel frequently observed, "Some are guilty, all are responsible." That maxim is not without its ambiguities, but the alternative is to accept the end of one nation under God.

If we understand that, we have no choice but to condemn and stigmatize as effectively as we can separatisms and racisms in whatever form. Pusillanimous academics who have been intimidated by radical shuffles must find the courage to challenge the racial separatism now so deeply entrenched at most major universities. People who say they are speaking "as a white male" or as an "African American female" are to be told in no uncertain terms that they have nothing interesting to say unless they are prepared to speak as themselves. They should know that, if they are to claim serious attention, they cannot demean themselves by reducing their identity to a contingency over which they have no control.

If we understand what is at stake, in every forum

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on every subject there will be zero tolerance of the abdication of personal responsibility. Nothing will do but a frankly moral condemnation of crime and vice, whether the vice be drug addiction or everyday sloth. The old excuses are out. Victim politics is finished. The American people have simply turned a deaf ear to all that. They've had enough, they've had more than enough. That seems harsh, and it is, unless joined to the hope that there is still a will to overcome the American dilemma, as in "We shall overcome."

If we want to overcome black-white hostilities, we will have to do it the old fashioned way: blacks befriending whites and whites befriending blacks, and learning to trust one another and work together. Undaunted by the checkerboard effect, we can do what we can do. As Loury puts it, change comes one by one and from the inside out. This is a different kind of affirmative action that can make a difference for the better. In many parts of the country, black and white local churches, one by one, can form real partnerships, and stick with it. Will the white churches usually be more affluent and therefore tempted to patronize the black churches? Maybe so, but so what? The temptation can be resisted, and the important thing is that what is done is done together as equals in Christ.

Not the End of Public Policy

Nor, despite all the public policy disappointments, are we bereft of political remedies. Leave it to others to argue that welfare reform is a fiscal imperative. Welfare reform is a moral imperative. Those who claim to speak for the poor but don't know any poor people stand exposed as the frauds that they are. Hundreds of welfare experiments in all fifty states must get underway, and must be carefully tested not—or not chiefly—by whether they save money or cut down the size of government but by whether they help people take charge of their lives and enter the mainstream of American opportunity and responsibility.

Then there is adoption. In recent years all kinds of policies and procedures have been put into place making interracial adoption impossible or extremely difficult. Such policies must be called what they are. They are racist. Hundreds of thousands of children have their lives blighted by being shuffled from place to place in foster care while millions of American couples yearn to adopt them. Couples pay many thousands of dollars to have people search out children in Asia and Latin America, while ideologically driven social workers and psychologists here at home tell us it is better for a child to die in a drive-by shooting than to have his "black identity" confused because he is adopted by white people. This is madness, and cruelty, of a high order.

And we can institute real school choice. Parental choice in education is a matter of simple justice, and for many poor parents it is a matter of survival. Government monopoly school systems in New York and every other major city are an unmitigated disaster. They cannot be fixed, they must be replaced. The monopoly is defended by what is probably the most powerful political lobby in America, the teachers' unions. Whatever the noble intentions and heroic efforts of many teachers, these unions are the enemy of the children of the poor. With very few exceptions, nobody in these major cities who can afford an alternative sends their children to the public school.

In New York City, it is generously estimated that one out of ten poor children beginning first grade will graduate from high school prepared for a real college education—"real" meaning not majoring in "black studies" or some other pseudo-discipline, and not dropping out in the first or second year. Ninety percent of the students in the parochial schools of the city—drawn from the same population—go on to college or technical training for a real job. The government school spends $9,000 per year per student, the parochial school considerably less than half of that. Middle-class and wealthy Americans have school choice. They pay tuition or move to where the schools are better. In opposing vouchers and other remedies, the government school establishment invokes the separation of church and state. What we need, what the poor most particularly need, is the separation of school and state.

The O. J. verdict. Farrakhan. A Great Black Hope who declines to save us. Thirty years of mostly well-intended policies that have turned upon us with a vengeance. It's not what we had in mind back then; it's not what we had in mind at all. But now we know where it started going wrong. It started going wrong when we tried to remedy malign race-consciousness with benign race-consciousness, when we started counting by race. So what is to be done? Perhaps just a few things in public policy, but those few things need urgently to be done. For the most part, it is a matter of one by one, from the inside out.

FT

SUBJECTS BOTH BIG AND IMPORTANT

Catholicism, Liberalism, and Communitarianism. Big subjects, those. The book of essays by that title is edited by Kenneth L. Grasso, Gerard V. Bradley, and Robert P. Hunt and is published by Rowman &

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Littlefield (271 pp., $26.95). The subtitle is *The Catholic Intellectual Tradition and the Moral Foundations of Democracy*, so you can see the subject is, to say the least, comprehensive. You know I would not have written the foreword to this book if I didn't think it was very important. Herewith what I wrote:

This book makes a very ambitious proposal. The proposal is that Catholic social thought can contribute significantly to revivifying the American experiment in liberal democracy. That there is a need, an urgent need, for such a revival is today widely recognized by thinkers across the political and philosophical spectrum. Some of the essays here are polemical and others apologetic, but the book taken all in all is a proposal. As such, it must make its case sometimes in conversation with and sometimes against other proposals that are advanced in the public square of democratic discourse.

The fact that it is a Catholic proposal does not give it privileged status. Indeed, in the opinion of many, that fact may make it distinctly suspect. Catholicism and democracy, after all, have had a rather rocky history. For many readers, the arguments pressed in these essays will have to win acceptance despite, not because of, their Catholic provenance. Part of the ambitiousness of this project is to demonstrate that Catholic also means catholic; that Catholic social thought is truly comprehensive of the truths and concerns important to those who are not Catholic, and that its being comprehensively catholic is fully faithful to its being authentically Catholic.

Readers would be suspicious, and rightly so, of Catholics presenting an otherwise convincing public philosophy that does not square with the teaching of the Catholic Church. Just as rightly, they would have slight interest in an argument that does no more than demonstrate that democracy is compatible with Catholic teaching. That argument was of great concern to an earlier generation of Catholics, but it is chiefly of interest to Catholics. On the far side of the older argument over the compatibility of Catholicism and democracy, this book seeks to convince us that the principles and practices of the free society are made necessary by Catholic teaching. Beyond that, we are asked to examine the claim that Catholic teaching proposes the most compelling understanding of a society that is both free and just.

Something New

There could not have been a book like this fifty years ago. And maybe not even fifteen years ago. Fifty years ago, a self-consciously immigrant Catholicism was still in a largely defensive posture, uncertain about its place in the American experiment, and even more uncertain about the fit between Catholic teaching and the constituting principles of the American public order. Fifteen years ago, also in an essentially defensive mode, Catholic thinkers were eager to demonstrate that they could be good liberals just like everybody else—it being assumed that everybody else defined what it meant to be a good liberal. Of course, both fifty and fifteen years ago, there were exceptions, but as a rule Catholics had neither the confidence nor the inclination to propose Catholic social thought as a critical and constructive resource for putting the American experiment on more solid philosophical and moral foundations.

The new moment of which this book is one evidence is made possible, in large part, by the much-discussed "crisis of liberalism." As more and more secular intellectuals became aware that they could not offer a philosophical defense of the liberalism that they cherished, an opening was created for substantively different arguments. Aside from those who, like Richard Rorty, are content to say that the liberal society is their "ironic" preference, thoughtful citizens recognize that this kind of experiment must be philosophically and morally legitimated if it is to be sustained. The crisis of liberalism coincided with the dramatic development of Catholic teaching on the free and just social order. The Magna Carta of that development was the Second Vatican Council, and it has been vigorously advanced and elaborated by the pontificate of John Paul II. One edges only a little distance out on the limb by saying that this book could not have been written before *Centesimus Annus*.

But then one quickly edges back again, lest the impression be given that these essays subscribe to the pernicious notion that there are two Catholic Churches, the preconciliar and the postconciliar (or the pre-John Paul II and John Paul II churches). The Catholic intellectual tradition and, more specifically, Catholic social teaching long predate our historical moment, as, for that matter, does reflection on "the moral foundations of democracy." The singular nature of this moment may be that it provides the opportunity for a less inhibited engagement of Catholic teaching and democratic theory—less inhibited from the Catholic side because of the historical ascendancy of democracy in the framework of the Anglo-American experience, rather than the French revolutionary framework with its powerful animus against religion in general and Catholicism in particular. And the engagement is less inhibited on the side of the friends of democracy because it has become evident also to many non-Catholics that, at the edge of the Third Millennium, the Catholic Church is, intellectually and institutionally, the world's most influential champion of human freedom.

That the Catholic Church is such a champion may not be self-evidently true to some readers. These

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essays may not convince them of that claim, but they are surely a persuasive invitation to entertain the possibility of its being true. In his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, John Paul II writes, "The Church imposes nothing; she only proposes." A critically important question is whether that is a statement of principle or only an acknowledgment of limitations upon the Church's power under contemporary circumstances. John Paul clearly intends to say that, even if the Church could impose, she should not and would not. The free society is composed of free persons who are called to respond freely to the truth proposed by the Church. No other kind of response is desired by the Church or pleasing to the Church's Lord. In Catholic teaching, human freedom is not grudgingly acknowledged but theologically imperative. Freedom is ordered to truth but freedom can never be coerced to truth.

This book should be viewed, then, as a proposal. It proposes a more secure moral foundation for liberalism, community, and democracy, and it proposes better ways of understanding liberalism, community, and democracy. Put differently, this is not just a case of Catholicism coming to the moral rescue of liberal democracy in crisis. It is catholic thought in the service of better understanding of how the crisis came about, and it is Catholic thought proposing a different, more morally compelling, and more enduring idea of the democratic experiment. To be sure, a few of the essayists perhaps are not entirely untouched by a suspicion that the democratic experiment was and remains a misbegotten idea. In that sense, these pages reflect a reciprocal testing—a testing of democratic theory and practice by Catholic thought, and a testing of Catholic thought by democratic theory and practice. For a few participants in this discussion, the suspicion may be that one or the other must prevail; for most, the clear hope is that both will emerge stronger by virtue of their mutual and vigorous engagement.

FT

A MOLE SELF-EXPOSED

Conservative Catholics in this country are frequently unhappy with political and economic statements issuing from the United States Catholic Conference (USCC), the action arm of the U.S. bishops. And it is true that all too often the staff of the USCC—with exceptions, such as the splendid pro-life office—sounds like an auxiliary of the Democratic Party. But whatever the justified discontents of Catholics here, they are small compared with the complaints of Catholics in Canada.

For seventeen years Tony Clarke, an Anglican, directed the Social Affairs department of the Canadian bishops conference, working in tandem with liberation theologian Gregory Baum. Now Clarke has written a book about that experience, *Behind the Mitre: A Mole in the Chancery* (HarperCollins). Clarke, a champion of class struggle who has been enamored of almost every lefty cause that has come down the pike, exults in the fact that, with the help of a few friendly bishops, he was a very successful "mole" in undermining a conservative hierarchy that is captive to the "corporate agenda." He writes, "By the end of the [1980s], the Canadian bishops were producing between 8 and 10 percent of the world's output in Catholic social teaching documents, far beyond our proportional representation in the global church. . . . Our world-wide reputation in the social justice field [had been] growing since the sixties." What a curious boast of quantified productivity; he sounds almost like one of those despised capitalists.

The mole's greatest victory was the 1982 manifesto by the bishops conference, *Ethical Reflections on the Economic Crisis*. He writes that it garnered nineteen editorials, mostly favorable, and even the *Washington Post* and *New York Times* took note of it. Small town socialist makes it big. By this time, however, some bishops were beginning to suspect that Mr. Clarke's economic reflections posed an ethical crisis. After failing to get the bishops to oppose the North American Free Trade Act (NAFTA), Clarke took a leave of absence to fight it himself, and at the 1992 NAFTA signing ceremony stood up and called Prime Minister Brian Mulroney a liar. The bishops were not amused, and refused to give him his old job back. Another victory for the "corporate agenda."

Grumbling that moles get no respect, Mr. Clarke is by no means prepared to call off the revolution. At the end of the book he is looking for other institutions that might fill the moral vacuum left by the abdication of the bishops. It is reported that the Canadian percentage of "the world's output in Catholic social teaching documents" has sharply declined in the last few years. A pity, some might think. It was nice to have a neighbor to the North that made the USCC look so very sensible.

FT

HUMOR ON THE CRUSTY SIDE

In the Church of England, in the Episcopal Church, and, soon, in the entire Anglican communion, it seems that Anglo-Catholic convictions and their proponents are being thoroughly routed, and rooted

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out. A century and a half ago, John Henry Newman concluded that Anglicanism as a *via media* between Catholicism and Protestantism is a delusion—a "paper church" he called it—and his judgment now appears to many to be vindicated beyond reasonable doubt. The long-standing Anglican concern that Rome recognize the legitimacy of Anglican orders is now largely a thing of the past. The dominant view among Episcopalians in the U.S. appears to be that this is "our church" and we can arrange things, including ordered ministry, as we think best. That, in unmistakable contrast to the Anglo-Catholic claim that Anglicanism is, along with Rome and Orthodoxy, a branch of the one Catholic Church.

It is difficult to overestimate the sense of betrayal felt by Roman Catholics and Orthodox who have over the years been so ecumenically engaged with Anglicanism. In response to Anglicanism's declaring itself to be one more Protestant denomination among others, there are signs of crustiness among their former ecumenical partners. One Roman Catholic prelate, for instance, recently found himself on a platform with several Episcopal bishops, including a woman bishop. In the course of the meeting, he several times referred to her as Bishop _____, and afterwards a very conservative Catholic questioned the propriety of lending credibility to the claim that a woman could be a bishop. "Why not?" responded the prelate, "She's as much of a bishop as the rest of them."

Also on the crusty side is the story told by another Catholic bishop and ecumenist who has been intimately involved in Anglican relations. Several years ago, he says, he visited a priest friend who was in the hospital. Asked how things were going, the bishop mentioned the enormous ecumenical difficulties posed by the likelihood that the Church of England would vote to ordain women. His bed-ridden friend rose on his elbows and declared, "But why on earth should that be a problem? They can't ordain *men*, can they?"

Anglicans will probably not find these anecdotes amusing, and a few years ago ecumenically minded Catholics would not have laughed at them either. But things have changed, and behind the humor is a great disappointment among Anglicans and Roman Catholics who not so long ago thought that they sighted on the horizon at least a glimpse of the possibility of reunion. Some Anglo-Catholics have left the Anglican communion to join new groups professing to be orthodox Anglicanism, many others are entering into full communion with Rome, and Rome has declared that disappointments and setbacks require a redoubling of ecumenical effort. As for the eclipse of the prospect of reunion, it seems not to phase those who now seem to be in charge of the Anglican communion.

FT

The Way of Honor

There is hardly a more civilized voice in contemporary public discourse than that of Glenn Tinder. He is a person whose arguments, also in these pages, hold out hope that old-fashioned liberalism, understood as intelligence and decency, is not entirely dead. Tinder, who for many years taught political science at the University of Massachusetts, wrote a book some twenty years ago called *Tolerance: Toward a New Civility*. Now a much rewritten version has been published by the University of Missouri Press under the title *Tolerance and Community* (247 pp., $39.95).

Then Tinder was writing against radical intellectuals such as Herbert Marcuse and Robert Paul Wolff, on the one hand, and against liberals of an historically optimistic cast, such as Mill and Locke, on the other. As reflected in the title, the new edition takes up many of the themes associated with "communitarianism," a movement that gained considerable attention a few years ago. Tinder's argument turns importantly upon the distinction between society and community; a reasonably just society makes community possible, the latter being defined in terms of engagement, attentiveness, and openness to others. And, finally, to the Other. "The most conspicuous difference between the present work and anything I would write now on tolerance," Tinder says, "is probably that it is not related explicitly to the principles of Christianity. Although I was a Christian when I wrote the earlier work, I had not yet learned to write as a Christian."

Tinder certainly writes as a Christian now, and the reader may be excused for thinking that, although not so explicitly, he wrote as a Christian then. For instance, this from his conclusion: "It may seem that the tolerant society thus sketched—careful of its cohesion, even to the extent of limiting tolerance, yet attentive, democratic, and pluralistic—is incomplete, somehow in need of rounding off. Incompleteness, or tentativeness, however, is precisely the quality I have intended to suggest. No society is a community and no institution speaks with absolute authority concerning the requirements of community; practically every major argument in this essay has led us in the direction of these conclusions. What they imply is that we must resist our desire for a complete, rounded-off social ideal. We must bear the discomfort of a world in which no social arrangements, not even arrangements that are merely theoretical, can be wholly trusted." To which today's Tinder might add the observation that "we have here no abiding city."

Civility is today often judged to be a wimpish virtue or no virtue at all. For Tinder, it is the difficult achievement of the disciplined soul. "Here we find ourselves drawing together some of the main

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threads in these reflections—attentiveness and openness, veracity and responsibility. It is unnecessary to try to describe all of the correlations among these virtues, which are numerous. What matters to us here is that these virtues provide a general definition of civility—of the stance of a person who, as far as possible, is deliberately and carefully related (attentively and openly, veraciously and responsibly) to all members of the human race, so far as they are encountered in one's life, yet makes these relations the substance of a resolutely critical and independent personality. Such a person—a civil person—stands apart from the impersonal forces of society and history, maintaining a certain integrity of soul. Yet this integrity arises from recognition that personal being is not single and self-contained but consists in relationships that implicitly comprise all human beings. Civility is personal independence achieved through resolute attentiveness to others and openness to all truth.

"Civility is a stance for all times, but it is perhaps one particularly suited to our own times. This is partly because it counters political despair. It rejects the temptation, arising powerfully from the tragedies of our time, to turn away from the life of humankind and to look for refuge in private life. It denies that the self can be saved by withdrawal, whatever the violence and senselessness reigning in history. What is more, it rejects the temptation, also arising powerfully from recent experiences, to sacrifice the self to a leader, a party, a political dogma, or some other idol. It is based on the Socratic-Christian conviction that your primary responsibility is in some sense not for history but for the state of your own soul—a conviction expressing, not indifference to history, but rather a sense of the limits of an individual's wisdom and power. Yet it acknowledges that caring for your soul depends on taking a responsible place in history, for a human being cannot achieve humanity in a state of abstraction from the human species."

Achieving humanity, also known as saving your own soul, is very much at the center of Tinder's concern. "But tolerance is mainly to be recommended not for its consequences, since a realistic tolerance must acknowledge that these are uncertain, but for its inherent fitness. It is truer to the obscure and trying character of reality and the limitations of human beings than are the ideologies. Above all, it is truer to our supreme responsibility, that of keeping ourselves facing in the direction of humanity and truth in times that tempt us to despair of everything but immediate pleasure. Tolerance is the practice of this fidelity; it is a readiness for speaking and hearing 'the truth in love.' In maintaining such a state of readiness you will probably not save humankind and the world, but at least you will see to what is your main concern—your own communal and truthful bearing in an age of tribulation and despair."

Remember when people would say of someone that he is an honorable man? Meet Glenn Tinder.

FT

IN DEFENSE OF STRANGENESS

I knew Hannah Arendt slightly and admired her greatly. Her writing on totalitarianism, in particular, had a powerful influence on my being an unapologetic anti-Communist even in my days as a young man of the left. I therefore share a measure of the disappointment expressed by so many upon the publication of Elzbieta Ettinger's book examining the relationship between Arendt and Martin Heidegger. Writing in the *New York Observer*, Anne Roiphe summarizes the tale: "The Hannah Arendt-Martin Heidegger story is about a professor who slept with his student, used her, sent her away, lied to her, joined the regime that wanted to kill her, and then used her again to rehabilitate his reputation." That's about it. Roiphe then adds, "A sorry tale, but not so strange."

Then she goes off the deep end. "When I read about the recent column in the *Columbia Daily Spectator* by a black student saying that Jews were responsible for spilling African blood, I felt a chill. My father, brother, husband, and daughter are Columbia graduates. Just down the street on Broadway, somebody is using the dehumanizing language of leeches and bloodsuckers again. Of course, times are different. The Million Man March hasn't turned into Kristallnacht, not yet.

"But I don't feel friendly. I don't accept excuses. I know that fear is a healthy response. I hate this black kid back. I'm not ashamed to hate my enemy. What worries me: Could I be Hannah Arendt, foolishly in love with a seductive America? Will I be reading the *New York Review of Books* when the next pogrom starts? My illusion of safety may be a delusion. Will I be quoting Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson, Emerson as they come for me? The black student on the Columbia campus is not Martin Heidegger, though Cornel West and the others who clapped their hands for the Washington march may be. I hope at least I'll return the flowers sent by my enemies."

Leave aside the risible suggestion that Cornel West's agitprop might be taken for world-class philosophy, what's wrong with this is the hysterical self-dramatization laced with paranoia that refuses to let the strangeness of the Arendt-Heidegger tale remain strange. The facile identification of America with the Germany of the 1930s, of ugly expressions of black racism with the Holocaust, and of a bright

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young journalistic self with the intellectually formidable Hannah Arendt—all this is the enemy of clear thinking. Roiphe says the case of Arendt is "not so strange." Her explanation is that Arendt didn't fear enough and didn't hate enough. Fear and hate, presumably, will keep Roiphe and others from making Arendt's mistake. Heidegger's Nazi friends might have agreed. The sorrow and the strangeness is in Arendt's disordered love joined to a respect for philosophical genius, also for genius shadowed by evil. The ways of love are always strange. Hatred is easy to explain.

FT

While We're At It

■ If it seems odd, it is because it is odd. It happened this way. Professor Stanley Fish submitted his article on why we can't get along together in this liberal society, and we were greatly interested in it for two reasons. First, because it very provocatively addresses the question of truth, and specifically religious truth, in public discourse. And second, because Stanley Fish is a person of considerable influence in current debates about, inter alia, the nature of liberalism. The problem was that his argument is, in our view, quite wrongheaded. So we thought it might clarify some questions of central importance to FT if we published an exchange, with Professor Fish having the third and last word. Of course on such matters there is no really last word, and one of the nice things about being Editor-in-Chief is that I do not lack opportunities to resume the discussion in these pages. For the moment, I will only say that it is most agreeable to note that Professor Fish now seems to think that, if we work at it, maybe we can get along together after all. At least his response does not press the original claim that we cannot get along together. But there is much more to be said on all this, and no doubt it will be said—in these pages and elsewhere, by myself and others.

■ The Dutch medical profession, without exception, heroically refused to cooperate with the Nazi killing programs imposed under German occupation. That was a long time ago. In the last forty years, one of the most staunchly Christian (Calvinist and Catholic) countries in the world went secular with a rapidity that has astonished sociologists of religion. And, of course, now the Dutch have their own killing programs. Although the killing of thousands of the old and sick each year is not, technically speaking, legal, the government has provided official guidelines on how to do it with legal impunity. In more than half the euthanasia cases, doctors kill without the patient's knowledge or consent. Recently, the Dutch medical association has issued guidelines for killing handicapped newborns and mentally incompetent adults. Last October, however, a Dutch court did convict a physician of wrongdoing in the death of a sixty-three-year-old coma patient. The doctor violated every "safeguard" in the book. Neither the patient nor his wife had asked for euthanasia (though their children had!); there was no "unbearable suffering" because the patient was unconscious; and other physicians were not consulted. The convicted doctor was given a three-month sentence, suspended.

■ A reader who apparently feels some sort of moral obligation to keep on reading, despite all, the *New Yorker* sends us a letter received from an Andrew Solomon who wrote in that magazine an encomium to doctor-assisted suicide and related escapes from the curse of life. In response to our reader's objection, Mr. Solomon writes: "While I would not wish to oversimplify the case, and though I recognize that there are many liberal Catholic thinkers who are tolerant on this subject, the Catholic Church as an institution remains singularly and aggressively antagonistic on the subject of euthanasia, and does more than any other organization in the world to stand in the way of death with dignity." Thank you, sir.

■ As everybody knows, the progressive position is in support of assisted suicide. Thus a recent national poll shows that voters aged eighteen to thirty-four are in favor (56 percent to 40 percent). People sixty-five and over are against (55 percent to 37 percent, with 48 percent strongly opposed). Older folk are the supposed beneficiaries of a legal "right to die." Funny they don't see it as being in their interest. Young people, of course, are not at all sure that they are going to die, or even grow old. On this question, as on almost everything else, religion is a powerful variable. A majority of mainline Protestants support assisted suicide, while Baptists and Catholics are generally opposed. Far more important than denomination is regular church attendance: 65 percent of weekly churchgoers oppose legalization (with 56 percent strongly opposed), while 70 percent of those who rarely or never attend church think it a good idea (with 47 percent in strong support). The Hemlock Society people are right in saying that the question is, Whose life is it anyway? They just have difficulty in grasping the fact that there's another answer to the question.

■ Methodists of the Wesleyan persuasion (it cannot be assumed that all are) will be interested in the *Aldersgate*, a quarterly newsletter published by the Wesley Studies Society (c/o Christ Methodist Church, 410 N. Holden Road, Greensboro, NC

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27410). Subscriptions are $8 per year. The Society is closely associated with Duke Divinity School.

■ Whether in defense of orthodoxy or in opposition to tackiness—or more likely both—there have been numerous criticisms of what is called the church growth movement and the inroads it has made among oldline Protestant churches. (There are also inroads, or at least inpaths, among Catholics.) Up there with the best of the analyses of this phenomenon is Frank C. Senn's "'Worship Alive': An Analysis and Critique of 'Alternative Worship Services'" in the May 1995 issue of *Worship*, a journal published by Liturgical Press in Collegeville, Minnesota. While Senn is a Lutheran, his account encompasses current worship patterns in almost all the sectors of Christianity in America. Drawing on history, theology, and the social sciences, Senn demonstrates that the working assumptions of the church growth movement and its forms of worship have their roots in European pietism and rationalism of two hundred years ago. What matters is experience and what "works"—both in generating religious experience and building the religious institution. It was Charles G. Finney (1792-1875) who combined these dynamics in American "revivalism," and that, according to Senn, makes him "the 'church father' of the church growth movement." Church growth folk—who commonly abandon denominational identity in their "community churches"—promote what some call "entertainment worship" in order to draw the crowds (and they do draw them). Senn notes that it is a very appealing model for oldline denominations (Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, et al.) who have been on the institutional skids for a long time. He cautions, however, that these "alternative" worship forms, self-consciously designed in opposition to historic liturgies, are visiting havoc on orthodox Christian teaching. The old maxim *lex orandi lex credendi*—as we pray so we believe—still holds true. "Orthodoxy," says Senn, "means 'right praise.' The praise is 'right' not just if we feel that we have had a genuine encounter with God by doing it, but if it is directed to the *right* God—the God who has revealed himself precisely through his word and sacraments." Orthodoxy is Trinitarian, Christological, incarnational, and eschatological—the last meaning, among other things, that it readies us for the final judgment. What is being widely done in Protestant churches today is sorely deficient on all these scores, Senn believes. And it does not matter much whether such churches think of themselves as conservative or liberal—or whether they join the "Beyondists" (David Frum) in claiming that they are beyond such conventional categories. Senn also has some sharp things to say about why "contemporary music" in these theaters of religious showbiz is not really very contemporary at all. But enough. It's an article worth going to the library for.

■ At its twentieth anniversary convention in Arlington, Va., the Women's Ordination Conference was still able to draw about a thousand participants, despite the 1994 statement by Rome that the Church is not authorized and therefore cannot ordain women to the priesthood. Taking a new turn, many of the women announced that the grapes of ordination were toxic in the extreme. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Harvard Divinity School feminist, declared, "Ordination means subordination [to] an elite, male-dominated, sacred, pyramidal order of domination." So who wants that? Sister Maureen Fiedler of the Quixote Center in Maryland demurred. Abandoning the goal of ordination, she protested, would be handing a victory to the hierarchy. "We need spokespersons outside the walls," Sister Maureen said. "We also need people with chisels inside, chiseling away at that institution, or it's never going to come down." (I love Sister Maureen because, among other things, she gave the editor of *catholic eye* such a lovely line. A while back Sister and I were on a television program discussing the state of the Church, including women's ordination. The editor reported, "Neuhaus Romed while Fiedler burned." The man is shameless.) Also in favor of sticking with the Conference's founding purpose was Sheila Briggs, who teaches religion at the University of Southern California. She said, "To ordain women is to give this rotten totalitarian system that the Roman Catholic Church has become the push into the grave." Feeling somewhat uneasy about the goings on was Jackie Hawkins, editor of *The Way*, a London-based journal of spirituality. "The role of Christ here is entirely ambivalent," she said. "He is my God, He is the person I wish to be ordained to serve. Who are we disciples of? My feeling is that the god has become equality itself." The planners of the meeting seemed to have precisely that in mind. They proposed that the goal should now be a "discipleship of equals," and set out an elaborate plan for a church without hierarchy or priests endowed with special power to administer sacraments. Catholic traditionalists can be counted on to grumble that, if that's what these women want, they should go join one of the Protestant churches that fits the bill. But that is to miss the point. To sustain the excitements of being part of a global feminist revolution against religious totalitarianism, you have no choice but to be Catholic. Unless you want to take your chances with the Imams of the Middle East. The Arlington meeting included the rituals now standard at gatherings of religious feminists. American Indian rites were blended with a Jewish seder and something like a Christian eucharist, and at the end there was an all-around laying on of hands that one of the organizers, Diann I. Neu, said could be taken as ordination by those who so wished. And so it is that after twenty years the Women's Ordination

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Conference has, as they say, come a long way. Those who as little girls once played at being priests have in middle age turned bitterly against an institution that did not accede to their demands and now are playing priests again. Flannery O'Connor famously said that Catholics must suffer much more from the Church than for the Church. She knew that there is no escape from the burden by making up your own church. One hopes that there were at Arlington also many other women who, although deeply disappointed by the Church's decision on ordination, know that Jackie Hawkins had it right. For women and for all of us, the question is: Whose disciples are we, anyway?

■ "This Ain't No Circus: It's Transgender Reality." That's the heading of an announcement from Episcopal Divinity School (EDS), Cambridge, Mass., for a panel discussion with Laurie Jean Auffant, who is identified as a "Unitarian Universalist Activist," and Dan and Yvonne Cook-Riley, who are connected with the International Foundation for Gender Education. The "Mistress of Ceremonies" is listed as "David L. P. Carter, Prudence-Moon." Don't ask. In the good old days, Unitarian Universalist activists would try to get you to believe in almost nothing. There's no telling what they try to cram down people's throats today. (Recall Chesterton's bon mot about the problem with people who don't believe in God.) The affair in Cambridge is sponsored by the Transgender Caucus of EDS, the Feminist Liberation Theology of EDS, and the Office of Student and Community Life of EDS. Given the tiny size of EDS, belonging to all those caucuses must cut terribly into study time. But then, who needs to study when you're living in transgender reality?

■ Two pregnant women. The one is told that her baby has Down's syndrome, and the other that her baby is just fine. The first woman has an abortion. Then it turns out the lab had mixed up the tests. The child of the second woman, a Miss Michelle Woods, had Down's syndrome, so she, too, has an abortion, at twenty weeks of pregnancy. The British *Daily Telegraph* reports the reflections of Miss Woods on all this: "I don't know if the other lady already had children or if this was her first and they'd been trying for ages. I feel ever so sorry for her because she suffered much more than I have. If she hadn't had the termination, she would have had a perfect baby—and I would have had a Down's syndrome girl in January when I was expecting a healthy boy." Missing from the report is any word of sympathy for two dead babies. They "had babies" and then they "had terminations." The story is all in the possessive case. Absent are the verbs of action. Nobody killed the babies. Dread is the language by which we disguise our deeds.

■ Fritz Eichenberg (1901-1990) was a refugee from Nazi Germany and master wood engraver who illustrated Russian literary classics and whose work appeared regularly in Dorothy Day's *Catholic Worker*. Orbis Books has put together *A Portfolio of Prints* containing twelve of his best-known works, including the magnificent "Christ of the Breadlines" and "The Peaceable Kingdom." Available from Orbis (Dept. S95, Box 302, Maryknoll, NY 10545) for $20. Toll-free number: 1-800-258-5838.

■ Since journalists are not exempt from the sin of sloth, it is not surprising that religion reporting, like all reporting, follows conventional story lines. Peter Steinfels of the *New YorkTimes* offers a list of Basic Religion Stories:

- Religious leader reveals feet of clay (or turns out to be scoundrel).
- Ancient faith struggles to adjust to modern times.
- Scholars challenge long-standing beliefs.
- Interfaith harmony overcomes inherited enmity.
- New translation of sacred scripture sounds funny.
- Devoted members of a zealous religious group turn out to be warm, ordinary folk.

Readers are free to suggest their own favorite story line.

■ Oops. In the November issue we said some nice things about *Image: A Journal of the Arts and Religion*, and gave a phone number for people interested in subscribing, 800-815-2997. That's the wrong number. The right number is 800-875-2997. The people at *Image* gave us the wrong number, but we won't mention that.

■ There are perhaps eight million Gypsies in Central Europe, with the biggest concentration in Romania. In her book *Bury Me Standing: The Gypsies and Their Journey* (Knopf), Isabela Fonseca tries hard to be sympathetic, but she does not try to deny that they are, with exceptions, a lazy, lying, thieving, and extraordinarily filthy people. Nobody wants them around. Reviewing the book for the *New York Times*, Annette Kobak notes that Vaclav Havel of the Czech Republic has said that the defense of the civil rights of Gypsies is a "litmus test of a civil society." No decent person should disagree with that. Ms. Kobak continues: "Günter Grass in Germany took the thought one stage further, saying, 'We need them.'" That is not taking the thought one stage further; it is a very different thought. But it is a very different thought that Ms. Kobak finds agreeable. "We need them . . . as a measure of our tolerance of the other, of ambiguities, untidiness, and unsettledness in ourselves—all vital but troubling forces, the Gypsy in us, which humanity in its most threatened and control-mad incarnations, like the Nazis, cannot bear to face up to, and so projects onto handy scapegoats." This is the intellectual and moral untidiness of an unsettled mind. If it means

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anything, it would seem to mean this: We need the Gypsies and their pathologies in order to face up to our own pathologies and thus prevent ourselves from being hostile to the pathological, which turns out not to be pathological at all but only the troubling but vital force of the Gypsy in us. Such contortions of the liberal mind are apparently necessary in order to justify praising a book that makes it depressingly clear that Gypsies are exceedingly disagreeable people to be around. To suggest that they should give up their lying, thieving, filthy ways might imply that they should become more like us, and that would violate every canon in the multiculturalist code. Better to say that we must face up to the fact that we are really like them. Which, in the case of a good many intellectuals who think that way, may well be true. I do hope I have not been unkind.

■ If you're serious about rearing Christian children, where do you find literature that really helps? One Catholic mother whose judgment I trust sent materials from Bethlehem Books, and they appear to be just the thing many parents are seeking. To have a look for yourself, ask for a catalog from Bethlehem Books, P.O. Box 2338, Ft. Collins, CO 80522.

■ James Trott of Philadelphia writes to correct one of our contributor's claim that Exodus 21:22-25 says that the death of a fetus is a relatively minor offense compared with injury to the mother. This, he insists, is a mistranslation and in support of his position he sends along an extensive discussion of the passage in *Christianity Today* (March 16, 1973) by Jack W. Cottrell, professor of theology at the Cincinnati Bible Seminary Graduate School. As the encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* notes, the judgment regarding abortion does not rest on any one or any several Bible passages but on the entire teaching of revelation about life created in the image of God. Nonetheless, readers who come across the invocation of the Exodus passage in support of abortion might want to have recourse to the Cottrell article.

■ "For Peace in God's World." The printed version of the twenty-four-page social statement says it was "adopted by more than a two-third majority vote." Very considerably more, one notes, the vote at the assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America being 803 to 30. It is altogether a remarkably sane and sober statement of what is and is not possible in securing a world without war. The characteristic Lutheran distinctions between law and gospel, between sin and grace, between saving redemption and social responsibility are all prominent, as is the employment of the classical "just war/unjust war" criteria. Some will cavil at the assertions about peace and economics, since the statement gives a very large role to government regulation and emphasizes the distribution of wealth at the expense of the production of wealth. But, all in all, it is a solid piece of work and the overwhelming support for it is a refreshing change for a church body that in the last few years has had enormous difficulties in speaking its mind on much of anything of consequence. We don't know how many of the 803 delegates who voted for it (or how many of the 30 who opposed it) actually read the statement, but they should, as should Christians in other churches who are pondering what needs to be said about war and peace. (Copies of "For Peace in God's World" are available from the ELCA, Division for Church in Society, 8765 W. Higgins Road, Chicago, IL 60631.)

■ Protestants, including those now so intensely engaged in the pro-life movement, were slow to recognize the great evil of what thirty years ago was called "liberalized abortion law." That was before the Supreme Court in its *Roe* dictate simply abolished abortion law in fifty states. By the early eighties, however, evangelical Protestants had not only been alerted to the abortion question (largely through the work of the late Francis Schaeffer) but were indispensable in the leadership of the pro-life movement, which remains the case today. Very slowly, some Protestants then began to think about the connections between abortion and contraception. In the past several years there have been a number of articles in evangelical publications suggesting that contraception and the moral assumptions attending it are not so innocent as many had assumed. Now here is a flyer announcing an organization called Protestants Against Birth Control (PABC). I haven't had a chance to examine the materials they offer, but interested readers can contact PABC at P.O. Box 07240, Milwaukee WI 53207. Telephone: (414) 744-8221.

■ Few people have contributed so much to Catholic ecumenical thought over the years as Father George Tavard, now teaching theology at Marquette University in Milwaukee. In a recent issue of *Ecumenical Trends*, Tavard examines the Vatican's new "Directory for Ecumenism," comparing it with the 1967 version. In general, it is fair to say, he liked the 1967 version better. In the course of his discussion, he comments on women's ordination: "On the other hand, one cannot avoid reflecting that if indeed the ordination of women in the Anglican Communion has posited a 'new and grave obstacle' (Paul VI's formulation) to ecclesial reconciliation, the Holy See's reiteration of its position on the matter (apostolic letter *Ordinatio sacerdotalis*, May 22, 1994) constitutes another obstacle. Whatever else one may say about it, the question does belong in the arena of ecumenical debate. Discussion of major issues is a condition for progress in the quest for unity as elsewhere. One does not solve a problem by being silent about it." The suggested theological

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equivalence between "obstacles" seems strange. If one party unilaterally departs from two thousand years of tradition even though the other party says—as it said many times before but with particular emphasis in *Ordinatio sacerdotalis*—that the Church does not have the authority to depart from that tradition, who has created the "obstacle" to reconciliation? *Ordinatio* does not say that Catholics must remain "silent" about women's ordination. Catholics who are engaged in "ecumenical debate" with other Christians who disagree on the matter—and, as the ecumenical encyclical of 1995 (*Ut Unum Sint*) makes clear, such engagement is not optional for the Catholic Church—will of course find themselves debating the question. From such debate and study the historic position maintained by the Catholic Church may become more persuasive to those, including Catholics, who are not now persuaded. It does seem, however, that ecclesial reconciliation is not possible unless this "new and grave obstacle" is overcome. Such reconciliation requires mutual recognition of ministries, and it is unlikely that this could mean the recognition of the priesthood of some (men) and not others (women). Moreover, *Ordinatio* leaves no doubt that the Catholic position is "irreformable," which is to say that it cannot be changed in the future. So the obstacle created by the ordination of women casts a very serious shadow over hopes for the restoration of full communion, especially between Anglicans and Roman Catholics. And yet Fr. Tavard is surely right to end his article with John 3:8, "The Spirit blows where it wills."

■ "Women and Religion" was the theme of the meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion last October in St. Louis. About five hundred academics, mainly sociologists, heard papers suggesting, inter alia, that ordained women are finding more positions in the Protestant oldline churches, but the positions are typically part-time and marginal. This, according to Edgar Mills of the University of Connecticut, means that women are being "ghettoized" in declining church bodies that are themselves increasingly isolated from the more vibrant sectors of American religion. Nancy Ammerman of Hartford Seminary said the evidence suggests that there is an inverse relationship between female leadership and religious orthodoxy. In the more liberal churches, women's participation is "as much a rejection of traditional religion as an affirmation of feminist identity." Roger Finke of Purdue noted that, among female religious orders in the Catholic Church, the more traditional orders are twice as likely to be recruiting members than those orders that have relaxed the vows of poverty and obedience and played down the community's distinctive way of life. Because many black denominations do not ordain women, Delores Carpenter of Howard observed, black women who want to be ordained have moved into mainly white churches, especially Presbyterian and United Methodist. There are no surprises in all that, I suppose, but I thought you might want to know.

■ You've heard it a thousand times, at least: "Ideas have consequences." I even saw it once on a bumper sticker, which is surely a consequence of a bad idea. I suspect that Richard Weaver, who died at age fifty-three in 1963, would have been appalled. His 1948 book, *Ideas Have Consequences*, is a closely reasoned and elegantly argued conservative classic that devastatingly assaults everything that public discourse by bumper sticker represents. Transaction has just brought out a book of essays edited by Joseph Scotchie, *The Vision of Richard Weaver* (239 pp., $39.95). It includes Weaver's wonderful essay, "Up From Liberalism," which is the account of a young man leaving his liberalism behind as he discovers that "we are inhabitants of a fruitful and well-ordered island surrounded by an ocean of ontological mystery. It does not behoove us to presume very far in this situation." Weaver is an intellectual saint in the conservative cult called Southern agrarianism. We have had our problems with some who today claim to profess that creed, but in Weaver's thought it is undeniably attractive, often compellingly so. Weaver's break with the myriad conceits of liberalism was occasioned by his study of the Civil War, especially by his reading of the first-hand accounts of the soldiers who actually fought the war, and especially by the accounts of Southerners. Herewith a brief excerpt from "Up From Liberalism" that will, I hope, inspire some subscribers to read *Ideas Have Consequences*, the book, and maybe pick up a copy of *The Vision of Richard Weaver*: "I am now further convinced that there is something to be said in general for studying the history of a lost cause. Perhaps our education would be more humane in result if everyone were required to gain an intimate acquaintance with some coherent ideal that failed in the effort to maintain itself. It need not be a cause which was settled by war; there are causes in the social, political, and ecclesiastical worlds which would serve very well. But it is good for everyone to ally himself at one time with the defeated and to look at the 'progress' of history through the eyes of those who were left behind. I cannot think of a better way to counteract the stultifying 'Whig' theory of history, with its bland assumption that every cause which has won has deserved to win, a kind of pragmatic debasement of the older providential theory. The study and appreciation of a lost cause have some effect of turning history into philosophy. In sufficient number of causes to make us humble, we discover good points in the cause which time has erased, just as one often learns more from the slain hero of a tragedy than from some brassy Fortinbras who comes in at the end to announce the victory and

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proclaim the future disposition of affairs. It would be perverse to say that this is so of every historical defeat, but there is enough analogy to make it a somber consideration. Not only Oxford, therefore, but every university ought to be to some extent 'the home of lost causes and impossible loyalties.' It ought to preserve the memory of these with a certain discriminating measure of honor, trying to keep alive what was good in them and opposing the pragmatic verdict of the world."

■ A James Jackson of Jacksonville (of the founding family?) writes, "Why do you sometimes use the first person singular and sometimes the editorial 'we'? Is it because some items in the Public Square are written by other editors?" No, that's not it. The answer is that sometimes one sounds right and sometimes the other. A good rule is always to write to the sound. Anyway, inconsistency is the bugbear of people who took a writing course.

■ I don't know why Marc Stern of the American Jewish Congress was looking it up in the first place, but he was, and he sends along what he found in the Manhattan telephone directory under "Cathedral Church of St. John, The." The Episcopal cathedral lists numbers for the following: "Box Office, Gift Shop, Greg Wyatt Sculpture Studio, Office, Security, Visitor Info, After Hours, School & Group Tours, Space Rentals." I can't quite put my finger on it, but there seems to be something missing there.

■ The sexual revolution—more accurately, the sexual regression—continues. The *New York Times* has this story on changing sexual mores in nursing homes. In truth, there's not much new in the story, except that what people who work with the elderly have always had to cope with is now dressed up as a cause, along with the required clinical jargon. At the Hebrew Home for the Aged up in the Bronx, administrators talk very solemnly about the sexual fulfillment of octogenarians. There's the problem of folk with dementia and Alzheimer's forgetting whom they are having sex with, or even that they are naked and in a strange bed for the purpose of having sex. Then there's the awkwardness of public masturbation and groping the neighbor in the dining room, about which Dr. Philip Sloane says, "A lot of time, the activity we think of as sexually deviant behavior is just reaching out for intimacy." Well yes, that is what people say, isn't it? Clinical psychologist Antonette Zeiss explains that we find it "difficult to confront" sex among the elderly because "it's the conjunction of two taboos about sex. The first is that sex is for the young. The second is that sex is for the cognitively intact." Sex is limited to the cognitively intact? Were that the case, the human species would have disappeared millennia ago.

Sources: Data on race census, *Investor's Business Daily*, October 30, 1995. On Tony Clarke, *Gravitas*, Summer 1995. Anne Roiphe on Hannah Arendt's "foolish" love of America, *New York Observer*, November 13, 1995.

WHILE WE'RE AT IT: On Dutch doctors who kill, *Life at Risk*, October 1995. Data on support for assisted suicide, *Life at Risk*, June/July 1995. On Women's Ordination Conference, *New York Times*, November 14, 1995. Tale of two abortions, *Daily Telegraph*, November 7, 1995. Peter Steinfels on Basic Religion Stories, *Christian Century*, November 1, 1995. Annette Kobak review of *Bury Me Standing* by Isabelle Fonseca, *New York Times Book Review*, October 22, 1995. Father George Tavard on women's ordination, *Ecumenical Trends*, October 1995. On "Women and Religion" conference, *Religion Watch*, November 1995. On sex among the very elderly, *New York Times*, November 6, 1995.

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EVANGELICALS & CATHOLICS TOGETHER

TOWARD A COMMON MISSION

CHARLES COLSON
RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS
EDITORS

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OMAN CATHOLIC LEADERS
GATHERED TOGETHER FOR
ONE HISTORIC PURPOSE...
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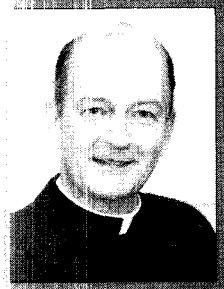

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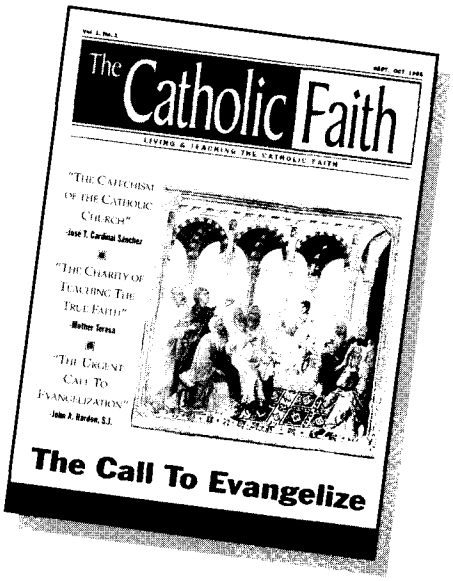

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